REALIZING UB 2020
Achieving Academic Excellence
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A MESSAGE FROM PROVOST CHARLES F. ZUKOSKI

The campus response to the first Realizing UB 2020 document has been extraordinary. There have been 2,834 unique visitors to the website, 24,500 page views of which 18,000 were unique page views and 300 written messages recorded on the site. The Campus Advisory Committee and the Faculty Liaison Committee organized 45 feedback sessions attended by over 1,500 faculty, staff and students. Multiple open forums were held with hundreds of people in attendance. The feedback received has been very helpful and ranged from a detailed commentary about the theme concept to the need to emphasize the importance of key infrastructures to the importance of engaging our alumni. You have asked that the presentation of the material be simplified and focused more on the needs of our graduate students. You have offered comments about building a more profound sense of pride within our community.

This new draft responds to your feedback and provides additional material promised in December. After much discussion, we determined that this document should express the strategic direction of the university. These directions are enduring and speak to important long term aspirations that we should strive to achieve. Plans for how these directions will be implemented will be offered in subsequent communications. Approaches to implementation are necessarily responsive to the realities we face at given points in time. The document presented here has evolved from one imagined as a description of strategic approach and implementation to one that describes the roadmap for our future where specifics of implementation will be developed and actualized in the months ahead.

As you read, please remember that this statement is still a work in progress. Please read the document carefully, attend an Open Forum and share your feedback. I am particularly interested in your thoughts about the themes we have identified for further development; the core educational outcomes we are proposing that all UB degree programs will achieve; the new degree program requirements we are asking every student to fulfill; the concepts we are sharing with regard to the building of faculty strength; and your thoughts about engagement in the years ahead.

By May 15, we will publish a condensed version of the statement of institutional direction that will capture our key strategic priorities shaped by your comments and opinions. In the months that follow, I will ask the deans and vice presidents to align their plans with the principles and directions articulated in the final document. We will also put in place the processes that bring units together as necessary to implement the larger initiatives requiring collaboration across the organization.

Thank you for your continued interest in this process and for contributing in a significant way to the overall success of our Realizing UB 2020 initiative.

Best,

Charles F. Zukoski
INTRODUCTION

The University at Buffalo has emerged from a challenging period stronger than ever. Despite tens of millions of dollars in budget cuts to our campus, UB’s faculty and students continue to impact the world through their pioneering discoveries and creative activity and through their engagement in local and global communities. In doing so, UB will make our mark in truly unique ways and with one goal in mind: to be recognized as one of the nation’s most distinctive and relevant public research universities.

One can neither discuss the current state of UB nor plan for our future without understanding the state of higher education nationwide. The challenges and opportunities faced by UB are determined in part by the larger forces taking shape on the national and global levels. We must be prepared to answer questions about the relevance of higher education; the demand for access to an affordable, quality education; new models of instruction and educational delivery, including the recent rise of massive online open courses; and the role of universities in driving economic growth in their home regions.

Amidst all of these questions, funding for public universities continues to decrease for many states, including New York. However, with the passage of NYSUNY 2020 in 2011, UB has turned an important corner and is in an enviable position to grow our faculty and meet our ambitious plans.

Realizing UB 2020 is the natural next step in the evolution of the UB 2020 plan, of which academic excellence remains the core and guiding principle. Our university community excels at thinking and partnering across disciplines and is poised to advance UB 2020 by building upon the collaborative, university-wide model that identified our Strategic Strengths. Through Realizing UB 2020, UB seeks to build additional strength in our research, education and public service missions while addressing global challenges through enduring scholarship and intellectual innovation.

Realizing UB 2020 will engage UB’s faculty, staff and students in a conversation about how to achieve academic excellence over the next five to 10 years. The narrative that follows articulates institutional goals that shape our vision; outlines our priorities in education, scholarship and engagement; and describes supporting strategies to implement our plans. In all, we strive to be responsible stewards of our resources and act in a manner that is thoughtful, sustainable and responsive to both the changing world around us and to the collective ambitions of our campus community.
INSTITUTIONAL GOALS

The core vision of *Realizing UB 2020* is embodied in the following goals:

1. *Strengthen UB’s reputation as a leader in research, scholarship and innovation in the global community of scholars.*

2. *Offer a superior teaching/learning experience that will instill core values and expertise and meet the individual student’s educational goals.*

3. *Improve the experience of students in a manner that creates a life-long sense of pride in the university.*

4. *Focus the UB external engagement agenda to help key constituencies build the capacity to address their needs while providing our faculty and students with rewarding new research and learning opportunities.*
THE STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Our efforts to build academic excellence are at the heart of a plan that takes UB 2020 to the next level. Our thinking is shaped by a conceptual framework that has two core elements. The first is that UB will select thematic areas where we will concentrate faculty strength. These themes will also provide the organizing structure for meaningful curricular change. Second, we will promise UB students that they will leave UB with traits that will prepare them for a meaningful life experience. These traits reflect the core values guiding the education we offer to our students. The concept of themes and the core traits of the UB education will converge in a more focused and coordinated external engagement program where students and faculty will help community partners and, at the same time, learn in new educational and research settings.

Our goals are ambitious. To be successful we must reach out to alumni, partners and university friends in our region, across the country and overseas. We recognize that the resulting support provides the margin of excellence that enables UB to lead with greater impact. Our alumni and friends have great interest in our progress and future plans and can help us in many ways.

Our priorities are interconnected; we cannot achieve any one without the others. We cannot attract the best students without the best faculty. We cannot retain these faculty and students without the physical environment to support their ambitions. We cannot realize the full impact of our ambitions without the stature that comes from greater engagement and global recognition.

A. The Themes

Themes are large areas of scholarly inquiry or the investigation of a major global challenge that requires new responses and ideas. Themes build upon the UB Strategic Strengths and will be a framework to consolidate existing strengths and make room for new strengths to evolve. Each chosen theme is intentionally broad, encouraging faculty and student participation from across campus and signaling our commitment to collaborative endeavors. The themes are distinct, but not disconnected. There will be work at the intersection of these theme areas as well as across the broad range of possible collaborations within a particular theme.

Developing themes is a new and distinctive academic direction. Themes will impact what we teach, who we hire, and how we invest. When properly advertised, supported and embraced, themes will differentiate us from our peers, help us to attract excellent faculty and inquisitive students, and allow us to emerge as global leaders in many fields.

The campus debate about the selection of themes has been vigorous. The five areas that follow have emerged as the likely choices subject to further debate.
TABLE 1
UB THEMES

1. **Health** – the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The theme includes the broad examination of promoting health, preventing disease and disability, and treating disease and disability and reaches into the management of health care delivery systems, the ethics, social dynamics, politics, economics, and technologies associated with health and wellness. This theme extends even further to consider the role of creative arts, the literature in the humanities that focuses on the body and its vicissitudes, and the role of the arts in the healing process.

2. **Innovation** – the development of solutions to old and new problems. Innovation is the development and the use of a novel idea or method or the idea of doing something different rather than doing the same thing better. Innovation can be an activity in which we engage and/or a subject of study and analysis. Institutions and systems advance innovation - new technologies, new processes, new products, and new ideas in their local and regional economies. This focus on innovation involves university faculty and leaders thinking creatively about how to leverage knowledge creation to achieve tangible benefits.

3. **Justice** – the exploration of how we organize our societies, the cultures that develop and the principles of equity that underlie sustainable human endeavors. This theme incorporates and goes beyond legal frameworks to include the study of social perceptions of justice, fairness, and security, distribution of assets within a country and across borders and the technologies that influence both our understanding and the delivery of justice.

4. **Humanity** – the broad study of culture, history, behavior, language, expressions of art and creative thought, human development and education, scientific inquiry, impact of technology, the structures of feeling, the workings of the mind and the body and all other elements that create understandings of what is humanity.

5. **The Environment** – the broad examination of the ways we sustain and improve all forms of our environment. This includes improvements in energy management, water resource management, the mitigation of natural disasters, the built environment, the social environment, the knowledge environment, the physical environment and the political, technical and social dynamics that impact environmental sustainability.

The development of themes is critically dependent upon disciplinary strength across the university. Hiring will continue in these discipline areas, and as the theme structure takes shape, faculty leaders will be expected to develop hiring plans that build thematic strength while complementing traditional academic disciplines. The theme concept will be most useful in facilitating a discourse among faculty with strong and different disciplinary orientations. In these collaborations faculty may begin to imagine new modes of thought that move beyond a particular disciplinary orientation. The theme concept will also create the conversations that can lead to
new course offerings and methods of teaching, new engagement strategies in areas of community needs, and new global partnerships that may not have been possible without the impetus of a theme focus.

B. Core Learning Outcomes for the UB Student

Every degree program at UB achieves certain learning outcomes. These outcomes are specific to a particular field of study. Beyond the objectives of these particular programs, we will promise students educational outcomes that reflect the core institutional values inherent in a UB education. We will sustain and create educational experiences that instill skills and traits that help students build their sense of self and their future. We are active agents in enabling students to think for themselves, ask and answer insightful questions and respond to challenges in thoughtful ways. To these ends we commit to building programs that enable UB students to achieve the following goals:

1. **Deep domain knowledge and critical thinking**
2. **Ability to collaborate in teams on complex problems**
3. **An appreciation of many cultures and life experiences**
4. **The ability to navigate the world**
5. **Excellent communication, information and digital literacy skills**
6. **Resilience and perseverance**
7. **Desire to engage in community affairs**
8. **Pride in UB and life-long engagement**

C. Strategy Elements

At UB, our teaching, research and engagement programs are deeply interconnected. The convergence of these missions creates the unique learning environments found only at research universities. We describe below the plans in each area that will help us accomplish our institutional goals. We will also make the connection between our academic ambitions and the support infrastructures required to achieve those ambitions. In addition, we speak about how we build faculty strength. Our faculty members are the standard bearers of excellence at UB. Realizing UB 2020 is, first and foremost, a concerted plan to shape the faculty complement to achieve our academic aspirations.
1. **Building Faculty Strength**

   a. **Assessing Current Faculty Strength**

      The faculty at UB conducts research, educates our students and offers the knowledge that partners seek in building economic capacity or in responding to the needs in neighborhoods bordering our campus. Faculty hiring, mentoring, nurturing and the processes by which we hold ourselves accountable are crucial to charting UB’s path to excellence.

      UB will add large numbers of faculty to its current ranks over the next several years. As we do this we should first understand where we have existing faculty strength and gaps across units, how well faculty perform compared with norms in their field and make judgments about what gaps we must fill and areas of strength we must build to achieve Realizing UB 2020 aspirations.

      Faculty members at U.S. universities define the metrics of excellence in their respective disciplines. With these privileges comes the responsibility to deliver education that is valued by students and society and scholarship that leads to a higher quality of life. Acknowledging these privileges and responsibilities, processes will be established by which UB faculty will articulate their standards of excellence in each discipline and develop methods by which we hold individual faculty performance accountable to these standards.

      Teaching loads are an important measure of faculty performance. A unit analysis of its faculty strength will include a review of teaching workloads against unit and national standards. To achieve our institutional goals in research scholarship and innovation, delivering exceptional student outcomes and effective community engagement, every academic unit will balance the teaching contribution made by faculty at different ranks.

      The analysis of faculty strength will identify areas of scholarship with critical mass and those areas where additional faculty are required for that area to make a strong national and international contribution in that field. Special attention will be placed on faculty strengths in thematic areas and in the potential for new cross-disciplinary collaborations as discipline strengths are evaluated. This assessment will provide the basis of developing hiring plans across the university.

   b. **Faculty Evaluation, Compensation and Incentives**

      UB will pay faculty at levels commensurate to their rank and their accomplishments compared with national peer university standards in respective disciplines. Promotion and the advancement to tenure will be recognized with an appropriate and timely salary increase. To encourage and recognize excellence, we will create a compensation program to initiate salary incentives that are triggered by faculty members volunteering to participate in a performance review. In addition, we
will consider the concept of one-time salary supplementation for extraordinary performance as a new feature of our faculty compensation program.

Beyond compensation, we will increase the occurrence and effectiveness of faculty mentorship programs. We will explore the implications and advisability of granting tenure to great educators. For faculty members who have received tenure, the university will institute a review program that is aimed at assessing and rewarding accomplishment. As an outcome of these reviews, we will target investments to achieve mid or later career goals.

The recognition of faculty performance will be accomplished in other ways as well. We will expand award recognition programs, publish periodic reports that promote faculty achievement and strengthen efforts to have faculty members nominated for internal SUNY and national awards and memberships in prestigious academic societies. We will examine our policies with regard to incentives for research and scholarship performance and design a teaching excellence program that will include financial incentives.

c. Building Faculty Diversity

The university seeks to increase the diversity of its faculty. We recognize the inextricable link that exists between excellence, equity and inclusion. We will broaden our sense of inclusion to reflect the diversity of the UB community in such areas as (but not limited to) sexual orientation, disabilities and veteran status as we develop faculty hiring plans for the future.

As examples of our commitment to inclusion as a core institutional value, we will improve mentorship programs for all faculty members and implement programs that make additional resources available to units for the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students from underrepresented minority groups. In addition, we will build the capacity to ensure an equitable distribution of salary increases and support resources for all faculty based upon performance to enhance inclusion and equitable treatment. The tactics of equity and inclusion in the effort of building faculty strength will continue to evolve in the months and years ahead.

d. Hiring Plans

University faculty hiring plans will be built at the unit level and will be informed by analyses of faculty strength, the choices we make to grow discipline areas and build strength in cross-disciplinary teams and the teaching needs of the area. Over the next several years, UB will add 250 new faculty members beyond current levels and replace another 250 faculty who will leave the university. At the end of that period, UB’s faculty strength should be comparable with peer AAU public institutions. The decisions about where and whom we hire will be among the most important decisions we make.
We will also examine the efficacy of hiring practices across the university. Hiring quickly enough to take full advantage of opportunities will enable UB to reach its full promise. As we build faculty strength in themes, we will need to consider carefully the structures and cross-unit collaborations required to make theme-driven hires. Cluster hiring will be encouraged and facilitated along with the possibility of recruiting whole research teams from the private or academic sectors if the opportunity arises and the strategic impact is clear.

2. **Research, Scholarship and Economic Development**

   a. **Cross-Disciplinary Teams**

      In our future, high-impact research and scholarship will be conducted by faculty with deep domain knowledge coming together in teams to facilitate discovery and thought at the interfaces of traditional discipline areas. We want to focus our resources and the intellectual capital of our faculty in the building of cross-disciplinary research teams. Our aim is to think in new ways. We embrace the notion that novel concepts and solutions to large-scale problems will more likely be created and discovered by cross-disciplinary conversations. Successful universities will form strong teams with the right breadth of perspective to address new scholarship opportunities. The theme structure gives us the organizing framework under which these teams will form.

   b. **Strengthening Core Disciplines and PhD Programs**

      While hires will be made to strengthen and provide structure to UB’s themes, the themes do not replace departments. The discipline structure will continue to be the foundation of university strength. Faculty will bring their disciplinary perspective to the creative process of working at the interface between disciplines. A large number of hires will be made in the traditional departments and these faculty members will have the ability and the experience to work with colleagues in other disciplines.

      As we add faculty, we will also strengthen our PhD and professional graduate degree programs. The interactions of graduate students and faculty in these programs provide a well spring for new ideas. High-quality graduate and professional students come to work with great faculty. They also respond to attractive financial offers. Our expectation is that we will be competitive with our peers in the investment we make in TA/RA stipends and in our university fellowship programs. We will strengthen services that assist PhD students in achieving their degree objectives in a timely way and redirect students who have fallen off course. Our students have expressed a need for expanded career planning services. Our faculty and trained staff will orient students to the opportunities and facilitate connections with prospective employers at the right point in their degree program. We will raise the quality of our programs following the guidance received in an expanded and systematic review of graduate programs.
c. The Innovation Scholar and Innovation Teams

As a public university UB has an obligation to use the knowledge we create to address global and local challenges and yield tangible economic benefits. We do not produce innovation without research but unless some of our research leads to innovation, our society does not develop the wealth that is needed to support more research. Innovation requires follow-through from the germ of an idea to the thinking about how the idea may be productively used in the world to the strategy for commercializing the idea to the tactics and practices necessary for moving the idea to the marketplace.

At UB we will build a greater capacity to create and commercialize innovative ideas. Among other ideas that will emerge in the future, we will be creating the UB Innovation Scholars Program as a vehicle to attract great faculty to UB and build a greater capacity for innovation in our region. Through this program, we will recruit accomplished academic entrepreneurs who assemble teams of faculty, staff and students to discover, prototype and commercialize new technologies. These teams will forge partnerships inside and outside academia and develop funding strategies that bring these ideas to the marketplace. The program will attract new intellectual capital to the region and be a stimulus for significant business development and wealth creation in Western New York.

3. Curricular Innovation and Student Success

a. Curriculum and Pedagogical Innovation

UB is a comprehensive university that remains committed to enrolling the same number of students that it has today. We are committed to offering distinctive educational programs that appeal to students and parents who have multiple options in meeting their educational needs. We believe that the enduring attractiveness of our educational experience lies in our commitment to prepare our students to meet tomorrow’s challenges. This is why we are promising every UB student enrolled in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs a learning experience that goes beyond the content of the degree program to the building of life skills. To deliver on this promise we will examine our curricula at all levels and ensure that these promised outcomes are met in fresh and exciting ways. We will articulate the learning outcomes for each degree program and institute formal mechanisms that assess whether the program is meeting its learning goals. And, we will ask every student to satisfy three new program requirements before they can receive their degree.

The first requirement is that every student will participate in an experiential learning program. Students will participate in activities that apply their degree program’s content in a real context outside the classroom. Experiential learning may be an internship, a volunteer assignment, a part-time job, a clinical experience or a faculty-mentored research or engagement project. Through this requirement we intend for students to realize a sense of civic responsibility (UB outcome #7), learn
the skills of collaboration \((UB \text{ outcome } #2)\) and realize the larger meaning of the messages conveyed in the classroom setting \((UB \text{ outcome } #1)\).

In today’s world distance is not a barrier to travel and the conduct of personal and business affairs around the globe. We believe that our students should be adept at recognizing possibilities for their life in the global context. Therefore the second requirement for all degree programs will be some form of international experience or sustained exposure to global cultures. This might be a study abroad experience, an extended study of a foreign culture, a language immersion experience or a structured tour of a foreign country. This experience will help the students develop an ability to understand different cultures \((UB \text{ outcome } #3)\), increase their capacity to navigate the world \((UB \text{ outcome } #4)\), build the ability to communicate effectively with people who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds \((UB \text{ outcome } #3)\) and create a distinct sense of personal growth.

In addition, we will ask all students to complete a capstone course offering. This experience will test the student’s comprehension of the learning requirements of the degree program and build an appreciation of related fields of study. This capstone program is meant to be challenging and to stretch the students’ sense of their grasp of the deep domain knowledge of their chosen field of study \((UB \text{ outcome } #1)\), enhance exposure to and understanding of different life experiences \((UB \text{ outcome } #4)\), test their communication, information and digital literacy skills \((UB \text{ outcome } #5)\) and confirm their resilience and ability to persevere at the culmination of their degree program experience \((UB \text{ outcome } #6)\). All of these experiences together will help build a sense of pride within our students about how their UB education prepares them for the next phases of their life \((UB \text{ outcome } #8)\).

Faculty leaders across the university will look to revise and strengthen the general education curriculum to complement these new education requirements. Using the themes as an organizing framework, general education will serve as the prime foundation on which the core learning outcomes will be built, as well as the basis for excellence in communication skills \((UB \text{ outcome } #5)\) that will make every student’s path of study more rewarding. We will consider as well the expansion of a teaching faculty to deliver introductory course requirements often taught by adjunct faculty members in today’s instructional approach.

In addition the health science schools will complete their work to design and implement the Inter-Professional Education program (IPE) for all health care-related professional degree programs and the schools of Social Work and Management. In the next phase of implementation this concept will be broadened to incorporate all professional programs. This program will give each professional student a foundational framework in ethics, professional conduct and an understanding of the interrelatedness of all professional efforts in the professional world. Beyond the IPE program the university will continually improve the quality of professional education on our campus. These programs are highly regarded but must be responsive to
constant changes in their fields and the introduction of new teaching and learning methodologies.

With the great advances in the technologies of educational delivery, the curricular enhancements we are implementing may be advantaged by many of these new innovations. The university will build a central infrastructure that can support a wide range of faculty teaching and learning initiatives across the campus, regardless of discipline, to prototype new methods of teaching and learning including “flipped classroom” approaches where students teach as well as learn, online programming, and other technology-aided “peer-to-peer” learning techniques. This infrastructure will be staffed at appropriate levels and have access to state-of-the-art technologies that can serve multiple forms of teaching and learning innovation. The staff will have the ability to identify best practices across the country and provide financial assistance that can help faculty reimagine the teaching and learning experience in their respective offerings.

b. **The Co-curricular Experience**

The shaping of character and skills extends well beyond the classroom. UB is creating a personalized compact with students through the Finish in Four Initiative that recognizes the university’s and the student’s mutual responsibility to keep the student on track to timely graduation. An expanded need-based financial aid program will enable financially disadvantaged students to focus on their studies with less worry. New undergraduate academies will give more students the opportunity to fully explore the UB themes through structured programming inside and outside the classroom. UB will also improve recreation facilities, health and wellness programs, leadership training experiences and career planning and placement services.

Although we are a large university, our goal is to deliver these services in ways that respond to the needs of the individual student. The university is committed to building a co-curricular transcript that captures the student’s connection to university life. This transcript and improving student systems that track progress to degree and the overall pattern of the student’s interaction with the university will inform how we deliver services to be most helpful for every student.

4. **Engagement**

a. **Principles for Effective Engagement**

There are two key principles that inform our plans to engage partners locally and around the world. The first principle is that engagement is essential to our ability to achieve the overall purpose of the university. The university, within the broader social system, has the fundamental responsibility to fuel knowledge creation and application to enhance societal purposes.
The second principle is that improving the life of our communities will lead to excellence in the core missions of our institution – research, teaching and service – and, at the same time, enhance the quality of life in the communities we engage. As an engaged university we cultivate reciprocal relationships with our surrounding publics through shared tasks that help faculty and students learn and the community grow stronger. These efforts support and promote a more extensive engagement culture on our campus, create curricular opportunities and develop our students’ civic competencies and habits. Engaging our community provides students exposure to new ways of learning, including involvement in faculty-led research that is relevant, grounded in community problems and rigorous in method.

b. Criteria for UB’s Engagement

There are many ways in which UB’s expertise might help partners in our region and around the world. We must carefully choose where and how we engage and ensure these engagements are consistent with our interests, the compelling needs of our partners and our capacity to deliver on the promises we would make. These considerations have prompted us to identify criteria that would guide decisions to pursue particular engagement initiatives.

First, the engagement should create reciprocal benefit where university and community partners share in mutual planning, implementation and outcomes assessment. The engagement should offer an enriched learning experience for our students, should advance opportunities for interdisciplinary research and teaching and produce outcomes that have impact and relevance. And the effort should have the chance to succeed. The partnership with community stakeholders should be supported by a credible business plan and clear evidence of the necessary community support.

UB faculty and staff already engage the community in many ways. With the theme concept and better coordination of the existing effort we can build an achievable theme-based convergence of service learning, a scholarship of engagement and community-building that few universities can match.

c. Building The Engagement Agenda

UB will coordinate our many successful engagement efforts in new ways that create greater impact. Examples of possible areas where we might make a valuable contribution include a role in strengthening the regional P-20 educational pipeline and in partnering with stakeholders in the neighborhoods bordering our campus to help them address persistent health, education and safety concerns. Also, the economy of our region is supported and sustained by a healthy and diverse cultural infrastructure. UB may also wish to collaborate more extensively with the leaders of local cultural organizations to preserve and enhance the vitality of this aspect of the Western New York experience.
UB’s engagement strategy is not limited to regional, state or national domains. A thoughtful, coordinated, long-term global engagement strategy will leverage UB’s considerable global assets – partnerships, off-shore education programs, collaborative research and service endeavors – to advance the university’s institutional mission and overall engagement efforts. Examples of extended global engagement opportunities would include an expansion of sponsored educational programs overseas and a more extensive engagement with our growing international alumni network for student recruitment, service, and scholarship initiatives. In requiring an international experience and globalizing our curricula, we will need to leverage our overseas partnerships in new ways.

**d. Engaging our Alumni, Donors and Friends**

UB’s 220,000 alumni are a powerful resource for the university. Our alumni are valued friends and help us in many ways, through their engagement in public service on behalf of the university, and as donors, teachers, student mentors and policy advisors. We must expand our efforts to connect our alumni with our strategic efforts. There are many touch points where alumni can help the university and feel a connection that will lead to increased philanthropic support and strategic participation in future university initiatives.

**e. Relationship-Building and Strategic Communications**

An engaged university exhibits a culture of strategic relationship building. That culture creates productive relationships inside and outside the university. In this culture, relationship builders have a keen sensitivity to the needs of the university and the needs of our partners and how those needs can intersect to advance mutual interests. There exists within the university the expertise to convert those understandings to concrete tactics of interaction designed around the university’s strategic aims. This is strategic communication, the mechanism for effective relationship building. We will strengthen the alignment between faculty, community and government relations staff, the communications professionals, the alumni relations and development staff and our executive leadership in order to build this strategic communications capacity.

**5. Infrastructure and Resources**

As we contemplate the possibilities of Realizing UB 2020 we must think about how we finance our strategies into the future. There are three primary mechanisms by which we can fuel the university’s academic vision in a sustainable and financially resilient manner: 1) by looking to new resource opportunities that diversify the university’s financial portfolio; 2) by engaging financial planning and resource allocation models that align resources with priorities while also ensuring that the cost impacts of these priorities are understood broadly across the institution; and 3) by seeking to build and maintain a model of operational excellence throughout the university infrastructure.
a. **Operational Excellence**

Operational excellence embraces the idea that we must balance efficiency with effectiveness; that we must think about services systemically; that we must think from a process point of view; and that all services must create value for the customer. Operational excellence is as much about culture as it is about structures, tools and data. The strength of the university lies in how we work together to serve the university’s mission and vision – that is just as true in infrastructure support activities as it is in our academic programs.

We will continually measure our success in achieving operational excellence by identifying performance measures and benchmarks of success. In so doing we must anticipate and embrace new approaches to the delivery of services required across the institution. Such alternative structures would include shared services and service center models, the outsourcing of services where it makes business sense and achieves customer service goals or the creation of infrastructures that respond nimbly to particular needs at particular points in time.

b. **Building Staff Capacity and Diversity**

The staff of the university manages our infrastructures and our support services. Growing UB’s ability to undertake research, deliver education and enable service programs of exceptional quality requires increasing the number of professional staff at rates similar to growth in faculty number. These staff members strengthen the infrastructures that will support an expanded and highly productive faculty and a diverse and high-performing student body. As we build this capacity, we are ever mindful of the benefits of attracting and bringing together diverse perspectives in addressing the service and infrastructure needs of the campus.

We are sensitive to ensuring the correct balance of administrative overhead and delivery of core academic programs. With this in mind, we will assess staffing strength in functions across the university, imagine new organizational structures where appropriate and understand where we have gaps that can only be filled by adding staff. We will hire staff with excellent skills appropriate to the functions they will perform. We will make the broadest possible search for qualified candidates to ensure that we attract the right talents for our needs and ensure the opportunity for all qualified applicants to compete for these positions. Special attention will be paid to the hiring and mentoring of mid-level staff who will become leaders for the university in the coming years.

As with the faculty, our goal is to recognize and reward staff performance. We will conduct more systematic and timely performance evaluations, increase investment in professional development activities and pursue the implementation of a performance-based compensation program triggered by a staff-initiated voluntary performance review beyond the standard performance reporting system.
c. **Infrastructure Priorities**

Realizing the key academic initiatives of Realizing UB 2020 is critically dependent upon state-of-the-art infrastructures. The addition of new faculty will create increased demand for research space, state-of-the-art instrument facilities, research computing infrastructures and staff support. The formation of multidisciplinary research teams will result in the submission of large-scale research proposals. Faculty in these teams will benefit from the services of proficient grant writers to orchestrate the proposal development process. Success in many of our health sciences initiatives will require a more robust expanded clinical trials infrastructure to serve those efforts. Arts and humanities faculty will require more qualified staff assistance to compete successfully for funds that can support their scholarship efforts.

The curricular innovations we are contemplating involve new teaching and learning technologies. Success requires a strong staff and equipment infrastructure to serve these new initiatives. Faculty scholarship and student learning patterns require greater access to electronic library resources and ever growing demands for more and faster internet connectivity. UB IT infrastructures must be upgraded to support these needs.

In order to offer a greater degree of personalized educational experiences and support and services at UB we will need to build greater capacity in a variety of services and functions across the institution. Among these are advising and student service infrastructures, the creation of better teaching and informal learning spaces that respond to new educational methods and better recreation space to ensure we can respond effectively to our students’ interest in their health and wellness.

As we build a more encompassing communications strategy we will expand investment in staff with the skills to imagine new ways of reaching out to those whom we help and who help us. There will be additional investments to enable the projection of our message and identity through new media outlets to new audiences as well as to the cultivation of our well-connected alumni, friends and other publics.

More generally across the campus, the image of a thriving campus is projected by its physical appearance and the quality of the spaces we build and occupy. The university must invest in a program that improves, sustains and beautifies our physical environs and creates more of the great community spaces that will be attractive to everyone who visits our campus. We will also follow through on the key priorities of our Climate Action Plan and the long-term goal of achieving carbon neutrality in the operation of our facilities.

*d. Expand and Diversify Revenue Streams*

UB will explore alternative revenue streams that mix with and augment tuition and State revenue streams. These alternatives exist. Perhaps most importantly we can
increase the flow of philanthropic support with a more vigorous alumni engagement effort. The Realizing UB 2020 plan provides the case for support that can allow greater fundraising success in the future. Income-generating facilities (housing, athletics, dining) and new ventures (conference facilities, recreation) can yield new revenues. Units will be encouraged to explore the creation or expansion of unique programs or activities that could be sold as a service to other institutions (software, web applications, training programs, space rental, etc.). The university can build on its track record of leadership in energy efficiency by exploring opportunities to build energy capacity for the future and reselling excess energy capacity. Other possibilities include changes in enrollment mix where we attract more non-resident students and students in programs where we have enrollment capacity, expanding lifelong learning programming, growing contract programs, increasing trademarks and licensing income. We must also build our capacity for business planning and real estate management and become familiar with new financing techniques such as revenue bond financing for major capital projects.
CONCLUSIONS

Our overarching aspiration is to be excellent in our scholarship, in the ways we prepare our students to be tomorrow’s leaders in and out of the classroom and in the community service we offer to our constituents. Realizing UB 2020 projects two central ideas that will enable success in each of these areas. The first is themes. This notion gives the university the framework to create a new scholarly discourse among our faculty on the campus. Thoughtful, strong, capable faculty grounded in their different disciplinary perspectives will come together to discuss difficult research questions within a broad theme. These interactions will produce new ways of thinking about these challenging questions. Ideas will form and be expressed by UB faculty in global scholarly forums. Our reputation will grow beyond where it already is today. The theme-driven cross-disciplinary faculty interaction will give rise to new content and methods that can be incorporated in the educational experience we offer our students.

The second idea is not new, but it is very important. It is an overt, public assertion of what are the fundamental purposes of the educational program we are offering our students now and in the future. It is a reminder to ourselves about the compact we have entered into with our students and a restatement of the values that drive what we teach and what we expect students will learn in our classrooms and in the other settings we place them in while they are with us. It is an open and transparent promise to our students that we instill lasting traits that will help them build meaningful lives.

The rest of the plan converges around these two ideas. We speak about ways in which we will build the faculty strength in the core disciplines so that we have the depth and breadth of discipline coverage to give heft to the thematic interdisciplinary discourse we imagine. We outline the curricular innovations that will strengthen our ability to accomplish the educational objectives we promise. We offer the prospect of a more focused and coordinated engagement agenda where theme-based research initiatives and experiential settings converge in a manner where faculty can test new ideas, students can experience new ways of learning and our constituents can benefit from working collaboratively to address pressing needs. These are new and worthwhile ambitions to pursue. If we are successful we will become a better university.

These past few months have been a time for extended reflection and campus dialogue. Your comments and this reflection have produced the concepts and ideas you see in this document. It is now time to bring the process to closure and publish a final document that will become the statement of institutional direction for our future. Before we do this we would like your reaction to the material provided here. We would like you to be proud and supportive of the directions we are taking. We appreciate your continued interest in this process as we work to become the best university we can be.