



University at Buffalo envisions 40 percent expansion

9/28/2006, 3:24 p.m. ET

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The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — The University at Buffalo may be the largest university in the nation's largest public higher education system, but its president said Thursday it is not large enough, and announced plans to grow by 40 percent over the next 15 years.

President John Simpson set a goal of adding 10,000 students and 750 faculty members in a transformation intended to elevate UB "into the realm of great American universities."

"We're not there yet," said Simpson, who took over the largest school in the State University of New York system three years ago.

With 25,000 students currently, UB does not crack the nation's top 50 public universities in size and does not fare as well as it should in the magazine rankings viewed by potential applicants, Simpson said.

To be competitive, he wants to place the research-driven UB in the same league as UCLA or the University of Pittsburgh.

"We simply need the size to do what we need to do," he told a gathering of business, political and religious leaders, whose input will be sought during the formulation of a master expansion plan.

"I know of no other school that is undergoing such an ambitious transformation process," Simpson said.

Success will benefit the entire region, he promised, by bringing more jobs, tax revenue and research funding while helping to stem the much lamented "brain drain" of educated young people. The university, which receives \$300 million from the state yearly, estimates it contributes \$1.5 billion to the regional economy.

Robert Shibley, professor in the UB School of Architecture and Planning, who will oversee development of the master plan, said the university expects to hire a consulting firm around January and have a draft plan ready about 18 months later.

"We're an underperforming asset," Shibley said. "It's about taking all of our elements and doing better with them."

The university's flagship suburban Amherst campus, along with two city locations will be involved in the growth plan.

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