REALIZING UB 2020

Achieving Academic Excellence

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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 its mark in truly unique ways and with one goal in mind: to deliver extraordinary scholarship that informs, invents and changes the world while transforming lives through education.

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; 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, where academic excellence remains the core and guiding principle. Our university community excels at 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 is implementing strategies that will build additional strength in our research, education and public service missions while addressing global challenges through enduring scholarship and intellectual innovation.

In developing implementation strategies, *Realizing UB 2020* has engaged UB's faculty, staff and students in a conversation about how to achieve academic excellence over the next five to ten 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 both to the changing world around us and to the collective ambitions of our campus community.

REALIZING UB 2020 OBJECTIVES

The core vision, mission and goals of UB are embodied in *Realizing UB 2020* in the following objectives:

1. ***Strengthen UB's impact 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 partner with key constituencies to build the capacity to address community 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 build communities of scholars, staff and students that engage with the complex issues facing mankind and our built and natural environment. These communities will be supported by activities in select thematic areas with the goal of delivering education, scholarship, engagement and economic development in areas that significantly improve the human condition. Second, our curriculum will be restructured to promise students that they will leave UB with traits that will prepare them for productive and fulfilling life experiences. 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 converge to create a focused and coordinated external engagement program in which students and faculty will work with community partners and, at the same time, learn in new educational settings and accelerate the translation of research into community impact.

Our objectives 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, Communities of Excellence and the Innovation Scholar

UB is embarked upon a key new academic strategy. This is the formation of communities of excellence engaged in exploring important educational, scholarly, economic and community challenges. These communities will be organized around areas of university strength relating to one or more key themes. After much discussion, we have chosen the following theme areas within which to focus this strategy: HUMANITY, JUSTICE, INNOVATION, ENVIRONMENT and HEALTH. These communities are groups of faculty, staff and students that come together to address issues that have implications for understandings and solutions to key challenges in one or more of these areas. Within a community of excellence, the participants will consider new scholarly discoveries, applications of those discoveries and new pedagogical techniques that perpetuate their discoveries in the minds of UB students as future thought leaders. It is this integration of research, application and pedagogy/curriculum that enables this academic strategy to best achieve UB 2020 objectives and meet the test of impact the governor, SUNY and the larger society now requires from its public research universities. These communities will be led by Innovation Scholars; academic and entrepreneurial strategists who can do and direct great scholarship, apply that scholarship in multiple contexts and connect

students to both discovery and application through structured teaching/learning experiences in UB classrooms and labs, and in community settings.

For these communities of excellence to achieve their envisioned impact, UB identifies four success factors:

1. *Choosing the best opportunities and areas of focus* – the communities the university forms must be sufficiently focused, yet be capable of broad impact inside and outside the university. This means that the university intellectual capacity can be leveraged and that the external world has need and sponsorship resources to play a big role in the processes of discovery and innovation in the area.

2. *Recognizing, finding and mobilizing great intellectual talent* – the communities must attract great leaders, great faculty across multiple disciplines addressing complex problems and great students who can support discovery and become tomorrow's leaders in these areas.

3. *Great partners in the private and public sectors* – the communities must identify the influential organizations who see mutual benefit and can make powerful contributions in responding to the objectives identified by the respective community of excellence.

4. *Great infrastructures* – the communities must be supported by facilities that bring members together in one location; that enable significant interaction with partners in proximity to where discovery and pedagogy occur; that contain the technologies and the human infrastructures that support discovery and the application of the community's work in external contexts.

The campus debate about the selection of the theme areas in which we will focus has been vigorous. The five areas that follow have emerged as the areas in which we will focus.

UB THEMES

1. *Environment – the broad examination of the ways we sustain and improve all forms of our environment. This includes, but is not limited to, 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.*

2. *Health – the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This theme includes the broad examination of promoting health, and preventing and treating disease and disability. It reaches into the management of health care delivery systems, and 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, for example, through*

the literature in the humanities that focuses on the body and its vicissitudes, and the role of the arts in the healing process.

3. ***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.*

4. ***Innovation*** *– the development of new and creative 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 encompasses the study of the concept of creativity, yet moves beyond study of the creative act or impulse to include the actions involved in applying a creative thought, idea or action in a larger, societal context. 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.*

5. ***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.*

There is an important convergence of perspectives emerging in SUNY and NYS government about how the educational and corporate sectors of this state can come together in more powerful ways to create dramatic economic impact. The State of New York has launched START-UP NY, a program that offers unparalleled incentives for startup companies and corporate expansion in the state and relocation of companies from other states to NYS through partnerships with SUNY campuses. SUNY has identified three goals that they will hold campuses accountable to achieve: expanding research sponsorship through investment in high-priority research areas, building a world-class innovation ecosystem and increasing student participation in research and entrepreneurship ventures in STEM fields in particular through more expanded and structured experiential learning programs. At UB, the Realizing UB 2020 initiative and the communities of excellence concept offers extensive responses to each of these goals in its emphasis upon the integration of research expansion with innovations in pedagogy and curriculum and expanded engagement with the economic and community interests in our region and across the globe.

B. Core Learning Capabilities for the UB Student

Every degree program at UB achieves certain specific learning outcomes. Beyond the objectives of these particular programs, we will promise to develop key traits in our students

capabilities that reflect core institutional values inherent in a UB education. 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 capabilities:

1. *Possess deep domain knowledge and critical thinking*

2. *Collaborate in teams on complex problems*

3. *Experience and appreciate the diversity of many cultures, people across the world and life experiences*

4. *Cultivate a desire and skill to navigate the world*

5. *Exhibit excellent communication, information and digital literacy skills*

6. *Build a personal capacity for resilience and perseverance*

7. *Create a desire to engage in community affairs*

8. *Have pride in UB and contribute to the university's welfare throughout life*

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 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 then make judgments about what gaps we must fill and areas of strength we must build to achieve our *Realizing UB 2020* aspirations. Our expectation, in short, is that our entire faculty will have aspirations of delivering extraordinary scholarship and extraordinary education.

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. In acknowledgement of these privileges and responsibilities, we will establish processes by which UB faculty will articulate their standards of excellence in each discipline and develop methods for holding 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, of delivering exceptional student capabilities 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 to make a strong national and international contribution in those fields. 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 for building communities of excellence in particular areas for developing hiring plans across the university.

b. *Faculty Evaluation, Compensation and Incentives*

UB will pay faculty at levels commensurate to their rank and 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 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. 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 to build strength in new communities of excellence, and the teaching needs of those disciplines. Over the next few 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. Our hiring plans cannot simply be about numbers. Our expectations and the metrics we will use to characterize our success are based on the excellence and productivity of new and current faculty members. UB's expansion in faculty represents a once in a generation opportunity for advancing towards our aspirations.

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. *Communities of Excellence*

In our future, high-impact research and scholarship will be conducted by faculty, staff and students coming together in communities of excellence to facilitate discovery and thought at the interfaces of traditional discipline areas. Our resources and the intellectual capital of our faculty will be focused on building programs with maximum impact often within those communities of excellence. 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. Our success will be achieved by forming strong communities with the right breadth of perspective to address new scholarship opportunities. The communities of excellence and the theme structure give us the organizing framework under which these teams will form. The Innovation Scholars program will provide the leadership and the experience to enable these communities to become leaders in the fields in each area we will build.

b. *Strengthening Core Disciplines and PhD Programs*

While hires will be made to strengthen and structure UB's communities of excellence, these communities 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. All faculty 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 wellspring 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.

3. Curricular Innovation and Student Success

a. Curriculum and Pedagogical Innovation

We are committed to offering distinctive educational programs that appeal to students and parents who have multiple options for 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 capabilities are met in fresh and exciting ways. We will articulate the learning capabilities 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 capabilities #7)*, learn the skills of collaboration *(UB capabilities #2)* and realize the larger meaning of the messages conveyed in the classroom setting *(UB capabilities #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 capabilities #3)*, increase their capacity to navigate the world *(UB capabilities #4)*, build the ability to communicate effectively with people who speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds *(UB capabilities #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 students' 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' grasp of the deep domain knowledge of their chosen field of study *(UB capabilities #1)*, enhance exposure to and understanding of different life experiences *(UB capabilities #3)*, test their communication, information and digital literacy skills *(UB capabilities #5)* and

confirm their resilience and ability to persevere at the culmination of their degree program experience (*UB capabilities #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 capabilities #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 capabilities will be built, as well as the basis for excellence in communication skills (*UB capabilities #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 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 undergraduate 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 more 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 engagement of partners locally and around the world. The first principle is that engagement is essential for 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 might work with 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 capabilities assessment. The engagement should offer an enriched learning experience for our

students, advance opportunities for interdisciplinary research and teaching, and produce capabilities 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. UB will also explore partnerships with and sponsorships from corporate and industrial organizations for purposes that benefit the partner and university scholarly interests. Also, the economy of our region is supported and sustained by a healthy and diverse cultural infrastructure. UB will 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 expect 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. <u>*Relationship-Building and Strategic Communications*</u>

As an engaged university, UB will develop a culture of strategic relationship building. This culture will create productive relationships inside and outside the university. In establishing this culture, UB will enhance our capacity to build relationships based on a keen sensitivity to the needs of the university, the needs of our partners, how those needs can intersect to advance mutual interests, and convert this understanding 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. <u>*Operational Excellence*</u>

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 manage our infrastructures and 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 at all ranks and across the professional and classified staff designations. 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. To enable success of our health sciences initiatives, UB will expand our clinical trials infrastructure. Expanded staff assistance to focus on foundations will enable arts and humanities faculty 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 personalization of the educational experience we will need to build greater capacity in advising and student service infrastructure, create better teaching and informal learning spaces and, in recognition of student interest in health and wellness, UB will create better recreation space.

As we build an 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 our well-connected alumni, friends and other publics.

UB is a thriving campus. Our physical appearance and the quality of spaces we build and occupy will reflect the dynamism that is UB. The university will 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. This investment extends beyond brick and mortar costs to the provision of dedicated, well-trained professional and classified staff that do the hard work to ensure our physical infrastructure responds to our programmatic needs. 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 changing the enrollment mix and attracting more non-resident students and students in programs where we have enrollment capacity, expanding lifelong learning programming, growing contract programs, and 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. The recent announcement of the START-UP NY program may provide the impetus for legal and regulatory reforms that will give UB more authority to pursue these tactics. Most

certainly, this program will increase interest both inside and outside UB for mutually beneficial public/private partnerships.

CONCLUSIONS

UB's 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 strategies for pursuing excellence. The first is theme-based communities of excellence that integrate scholarship education and engagement, and the second is the effort to instill core traits reflective of the distinctive nature of UB's educational programs. Forming these theme-based communities of scholars, staff and students offers a new framework for scholarly discourse among our faculty and students and with our stakeholders that will result in stronger education programs, more meaningful engagement with partners and a scholarship that has greater reach and impact in the areas in which we choose to focus. Our strategy of forming communities of excellence focused in and across chosen themes is aimed at enhancing our impact.

In implementing *Realizing UB 2020*, we are making the overt, public assertion of the fundamental characteristics of a UB education. The promise that we will instill core traits we will engrain into all educational programs at UB forms a 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 co-curricular activities.

Realizing UB 2020 lays out the tactics we will use to accomplish these strategies for achieving excellence. No progress can be made without a faculty that is committed to the highest standards of excellence. As a result, our tactics include how 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. UB is a research institution with the result that we provide the infrastructures required to build and sustain world class programs in research and scholarship. UB is an educational institution where the quality of our education is tied to the quality of faculty scholarship. Curricular innovations that strengthen our ability to accomplish the educational objectives we promise thus form central tactics for achieving our goals. UB is an engaged university. An objective motivated by our missions in research, education and service developed in *Realizing UB 2020* is to create a focused and coordinated UB engagement agenda in which theme-based research initiatives and experiential settings converge. In establishing strategies and implementing the tactics to achieve these strategies, UB defines our brand of excellence and provides a road map for achieving our aspirations.