



A Strategic Plan for Advancing Excellence

# **University Retreat Report**

**August 19-20, 2013**

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## Introduction

The 2013 University Retreat, held August 19-20, served as the opening conversation in the development of the UMBC's strategic plan – *Our UMBC: A Strategic Plan for Advancing Excellence*. The Retreat's purpose was to provide advice to the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee](#) as it begins to lead the campus in a multi-year planning process. More than 200 faculty, staff, students, and alumni participated. Retreat discussions focused on foundations of planning, including campus values, vision, past performance in achieving university priorities, challenges and opportunities in the external environment, and focus areas for attention in the next stage of planning.

President Hrabowski welcomed Retreat participants and special guests Chancellor William E. 'Brit' Kirwan and University of Maryland, Baltimore President Jay Perman, noting the special significance of beginning a new phase of strategic planning, "as we approach UMBC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016." He explained, "Because we have achieved so much, so fast, it is exciting to imagine what can happen in the next 50 years."

In his opening remarks, Provost Rous addressed the value of extensive campus conversations during the 2012-13 year of "planning to plan," saying this "provided important information and direction for the [planning] process." In this phase, the UMBC community expressed desire for an engaged and inclusive planning process. He noted that *Our UMBC: A Strategic Plan for Advancing Excellence* will provide numerous opportunities for campus groups to engage in the strategic planning process and enumerated [Guiding Principles for Planning](#) developed with

campus input: inclusion, communication, data analysis, open dialogue, clarity about decision-making, setting priorities, alignment with State and USM goals, and alignment with resources. “In keeping with our Guiding Principles, the design of the planning process places the campus community at the center of strategy conversations,” the Provost explained. The [Strategic Planning Process Diagram](#) provides an overview of ways in which the community participates in planning. “Faculty, staff, students, and alumni will be encouraged to participate as members of strategy groups and advisory groups. Planning leadership groups – including the Council of Deans and Vice Presidents and a [Strategic Planning Steering Committee](#) – will serve as “agents of responsibility,” charged with carrying out and coordinating planning activities in alignment with the Guiding Principles. Members of both groups will work closely throughout the fall semester with senates and other advisory groups to define the focus areas for the planning process and will continue to engage the campus in the work as it evolves over a two-year period. The [planning timeline](#) provides an overview of the planning process.

Lynne Schaefer, Vice President of Finance and Administration, presented on [Connecting Planning to Budgeting](#). She identified five priorities stemming from the full report [Linking Strategic Planning and Budgeting – Campus Priorities and Investments FY 2010-2014](#) for the next three-to-five years: investing in the academic program; investing in student success; building infrastructure for research and creative activity; environment and sustainability investments; campus safety, security, and technology investments.

## **Methodology**

An interactive survey tool was used to pose discussion questions and provide real-time data collection during the Retreat. These discussions were meant to amplify information collected in a

Spring 2013 [campus survey](#) and to provide additional perspectives. Polls and discussion questions required group and individual responses. A group of ten faculty, staff, and graduate students served as the Theme Team: Valerie Thomas, Associate Vice President for Human Resources; L.D. Timmie Topoleski, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Senator for the Faculty Senate; Philip Farabaugh, Professor and Chair of Biological Sciences; Tyson King-Meadows, Associate Professor of Political Science and Acting Chair of Africana Studies; Beverly Bickel, Clinical Associate Professor of Language, Literacy and Culture and Acting Director of Dresher Center for the Humanities; Kimberly Leisey, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; Stephen Bradley, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director of Visual Arts; Romy Hübler, Doctoral Candidate in Language, Literacy and Culture and Senator for the Graduate Senate; Dinah Winnick, Communications Manager; and Tymofey Wowk, Doctoral Student in Language, Literacy and Culture. They conducted the initial analysis of participants' common ideas and messages and reported findings to Retreat participants approximately two hours after data collection. The authors of this report served on the Theme Team and engaged in a deeper content analysis of the University Retreat data afterward to ensure that responses were accurately captured.

### **Data Gallery**

The [Data Gallery](#) displayed poster presentations from units across the campus representing initiatives and metrics in the five focus areas identified in UMBC's current strategic plan, *Strategic Framework for 2016*. The Gallery tracked progress in these focus areas and illustrated results of investments and emergent opportunities not predicted in the planning process. Gallery visitors had the opportunity to comment on: "What additional information do we need to better understand progress and opportunities in these five areas?"

*Focus Area I: Student Body Size and Composition*

Gallery visitors suggested a more detailed analysis of student experiences relating to financial aid, scholarships, support services, remedial education, retention, academic decision-making, undergraduate and graduate student body size in relation to faculty size, career paths, and a comparison of these experiences to other USM schools. Of particular interest was how these experiences vary across student groups, such as international, transfer, commuter, residential, and special needs students, as well as students of varying demographic backgrounds. A related question concerned the ratio of high school graduates to student enrollment and the qualities of the ‘ideal’ UMBC student. Visitors further wanted to know more about the impact of technology. They wondered how online programs may affect student enrollment and how students are being encouraged to communicate face-to-face versus electronically.

*Focus Area II: Faculty Size and Composition*

Gallery visitors suggested reconsidering the measuring and reporting of faculty labor and productivity in such areas as teaching, research, mentorship, and grants received. Related to this concern is the faculty-student ratio, particularly in graduate programs and engineering, and more clarity on faculty searches per college. Visitors proposed to consider the faculty size, work practices, and infrastructure needed for minor and certificate programs as well as interdisciplinary collaboration. They also wondered about the relationship between collaboration and grant volume increases. Visitors were further interested to learn more about the representation and experiences of part-time faculty, e.g. their teaching load outside of UMBC. They suggested a reevaluation of diversity categories beyond those used by state and federal governments to adequately represent the diversity spectrum at UMBC. They also wanted to

know more about the experiences of diverse faculty relating to recruitment and retention. A final suggestion is to clarify terms, such as ‘new hire’ and ‘start-up’ in a formal glossary.

*Focus Area III: Program and Curriculum Development*

Gallery visitors suggested analyzing in more detail the role of co-curricular programs and support services in student experience as well as faculty participation recognition. They particularly focused on study abroad, living-learning communities, and advising. Visitors further asked how our community thinks about and enacts liberal arts education and interdisciplinarity. Other comments concerned the jobs, skills, and knowledge requirements the state and country have, and contemplated the creation of new certificates and programs to address such issues as sustainability. Furthermore, visitors wondered about program quality assessment and relevance. The faculty-student ratio was a concern in this gallery, as well.

*Focus Area IV: Management, Organization, and Staffing*

Gallery visitors suggested a clarification of USM budget allocations in relation to achievement and a comparison with USM peers. Furthermore, visitors requested an alignment of priorities with budget categories as well as information on the management of one-time funding versus ongoing funding. Visitors also wanted more information on the allocation of funds toward graduate education, such as graduate assistantships and training opportunities. In addition, they asked to evaluate current staff productivity and needs in relation to growth goals. Of particular interest were training, capacity-building, resources, and measurement of staff productivity. Visitors also addressed business centers in terms of their potential advantages, such as efficiency, their staffing and management, and their salary implications. An additional concern was sustainability. One issue was the energy efficiency of campus buildings and equipment, which

could be reduced by sharing equipment that requires energy across departments. Another issue was the infrastructure for public transit, wave-and-ride, and biking. Visitors indicated that these areas should be addressed to reduce the carbon footprint of traffic onto the campus, to increase the connectivity across campus and to surrounding communities, including Baltimore, and to encourage collaboration between UMBC and UMB.

*Focus Area V: External Relations with Baltimore-Washington and Beyond*

Gallery visitors wanted to know about the impact of UMBC research on government and society, as well as the impact of internships on students, organizations and communities. Furthermore, they indicated the need for measuring internal community strength based on collaboration and its contribution to engagement on and off campus. Related to this need is a deeper exploration of athletes' service-learning engagement and its impact on fundraising and recruitment. Visitors also wondered about the consequences of not having a football team in terms of scholarships, student recruitment, fundraising, and external relations. Visitors additionally suggested that there should be improved communication with the campus community concerning fundraising efforts. Alumni experiences in terms of employment and their affinity toward UMBC was another issue that visitors addressed.

**Environmental Scan**

The External Environmental Scan was a crowd-sourced interactive discussion that asked Retreat participants to identify opportunities and challenges external to UMBC that may impact our future. Peter Henderson, Senior Advisor in the President's Office, set the context by highlighting [key concepts](#) from the report "Research Universities and the Future of America." The

Environmental Scan allowed for the mining of the wide range of perspectives and professional experiences represented at the Retreat.

### *Opportunities*

Participants individually responded to the following question: “From the vantage point of your professional field or personal experiences outside of UMBC ... What forces and trends do you think will create opportunities for public research universities in the next decade?”

Four significant types of interrelated opportunities emerged from the analysis of the environmental scan: partnerships, expanded access to education, workforce development and UMBC’s identity. The first of these was the strength of existing and potential partnerships, collaborations, and relationships. Some of these identified relationships were internal.

Participants also identified external opportunities with the public local, state and federal sectors and the private sector as extremely important. Collaborations with both Maryland’s community colleges and universities, especially UMB and HBCUs were seen as major intersections of opportunity. Other opportunities were seen in relationships with non-profit organizations and businesses in Baltimore and Washington, as well as through existing or newly established relationships with alumni. Industry was identified as having large-scale potential, with companies moving research and development to universities, particularly to compete with countries such as China and address global problems such as climate change. Green industries, cyber-security, bio-engineering, medicine, mobile communications, information technology, and health reform were seen as areas in which both the federal government and the private sector will increase funding in the future.



Access to education and the power of diversity surfaced as another major opportunity for UMBC. Participants identified local and global untapped student populations who are talented and underrepresented as markets having great potential. One specific example was the opportunity for more women in the STEM fields. Further, public universities will become more attractive as private ones increase tuition, and there will be opportunities for those who successfully lead in degree completion. This was seen as particularly crucial as demographics shift and different perspectives from UMBC's diversity can be harnessed to tackle challenging problems. Participants also mentioned that this shift will create new opportunities for faculty positions and research initiatives.

Closely tied to access and diversity was the opportunity for workforce development. Participants recognized the expectations that employers will have concerning more well-rounded students with higher skill sets. An aspect of skills that was noted was civic agency, where social issues will provide opportunities for presenting solutions in collaboration with the surrounding community, and these experiences will arm students to effectively participate as citizens. Participants further connected college-level skills to global economic security and advancement, and identified that the current job market coupled with the desire of the U.S. to remain economically competitive will create a growing need for higher education and a stronger public value of it.

UMBC's identity was also noted as an opportunity with the potential to capitalize on groundwork already built. UMBC's size was seen as an advantage to respond quickly to changes in education, training, and new interdisciplinary opportunities. The expansion of interdisciplinarity will be seen in translational research for the benefit of society, which the

community will experience through social entrepreneurial practice and the empowerment of citizens. Many opportunities for innovative solutions were envisioned, including opportunities for humanist and STEM interdisciplinary activities, utilizing 'big data' and the potential of the life sciences, and leveraging technology. Participants stressed the potential role of technology to enhance classroom learning while UMBC continues to deliver high quality face-to-face learning, where students have the hands-on opportunity to think critically and creatively about technology and learning. Technology will also be used to increase access beyond the traditional classroom and provide job training and skill development, and coupled with interdisciplinary teamwork, UMBC can position itself alongside the external community to identify complex problems and provide innovative solutions.

### *Challenges*

Participants individually responded to the following question: "From the vantage point of your professional field or personal experiences outside of UMBC ... What forces and trends do you think will challenge public research universities in the next decade?"

Four major types of interrelated external challenges crystallized in the analysis of the environmental scan: economic, competitive, student-centered, and global. The first challenge revolved around the multiple dimensions of funding. Participants noted concern over funding at the local, state, and federal level. They also mentioned challenges in the U.S. economy that will result in government agency cuts, changing distributions of funds, companies moving research and development abroad, and less funding for research outside of STEM. Many participants were concerned about funding becoming increasingly more tied to performance, a short-term focus for quick returns, and the rapid escalation and change of accountability requirements. These

concerns were evident in some skepticism about partnering with industry and leaning toward a business model of productivity, where corporate funding will change the nature of research. Diversifying funding was another element of this challenge. Concerns over the future of partnerships with K-12 schools and the community were also identified.

Participants stated that external economic challenges will influence UMBC's ability to continue to achieve at the highest possible level. They fear that the cost to deliver face-to-face education to undergraduate and graduate students could negatively impact limited resources, especially as the need to develop physical infrastructure persists. Attracting talented faculty and staff will also be problematic because of funding. Framed within this context is the relationship between the cost of education and its value. Many were concerned that the public, particularly parents and policymakers, had an increasingly negative perception of the return on investment for a college degree. Other participants worried that this perception will prioritize student job placement over learning. Of particular concern was the perceived value of degrees in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

The second major challenge was competition. Participants identified the future of online education, including Massive Open Online Courses, as a significant challenge, especially given the fact that high-ranking universities offer them. Others saw the growing trend of the 'flipped classroom' (online lectures with class time devoted to application) as another aspect of this challenge. Challenges were also identified among universities, including ones like UMBC but with more resources, community colleges, and for-profit schools focusing on workforce development over general education. A final element of this challenge was whether UMBC would be able to integrate disciplines within the university and collaborations between

universities, as well as the role of interdisciplinary research and the balance between research productivity and teaching, in the face of external competition.

Closely tied to competition among other institutions were concerns about students. Many participants identified attracting international students, especially as foreign institutions gain prestige, and keeping international students in the U.S. post-graduation as a major challenge. Other student-centered challenges related to perceived decreases in qualified students and how to attract talented ones, the production of well-rounded students and job placements, demographic changes and student diversity in relation to an increasing need for specialized services, access for different socioeconomic groups, management of growing community college transfers and non-traditional aged students, and the obstacle of the sense of entitlement and distraction from technology some students might have. Related to these concerns were those about student retention and graduation as well as student loans, other funding, and student debt.

The last major challenge centered on the rapid pace of globalization. Climate change, natural disasters, and political and environmental security were some aspects of this challenge. Another major element participants identified concerned technology. Some expressed concern over how to keep up with technology, changes in technology in the medical field, integrating technology into learning, and how technology will impact publications.

## **Values**

This session identified widely held ideals of the UMBC community to provide the Strategic Planning Steering Committee with a foundation for its work. Jack Suess, Vice President for Information Technology, gave participants a definition of organizational values and culture:

beliefs or ideals that are shared by members of an organization; ethics and morals that serve as the foundation for decision making; guidelines for action and navigating obstacles; and statements about UMBC's values. He presented participants with values that were cited by UMBC faculty and staff in the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* 'Great Colleges to Work for.' These values were collaborative governance, strong teaching environment, respect and appreciation, and diversity. He also showed participants responses to the Strategic Planning Survey questions relating to UMBC's culture. Survey participants identified it as diverse, inclusive, academic, innovative, open, nerdy, engaged, dynamic, unique, and collaborative. Kevin Griffin Moreno '95 History, Senior Program Officer at the Baltimore Community Foundation and founder of Potluck Storytelling, continued the discussion by facilitating conversations about participants' experiences at UMBC and their connection to values.

Retreat participants formed groups of three, shared personal stories about high-points at UMBC, and identified values present in these stories. There were a total of sixty submissions that ranged from a list of values to paragraphs explaining values. The ten most commonly described values were collaborative, innovative, supportive, community-building, inclusive, diverse, open, caring, respectful, and student- and people-centered. Participant comments note this is experienced in a number of ways. Participants explained that these values are important because faculty, staff, and students are empowered to be agents of change who can make a difference. Everyone's voice counts and people listen to each other. Furthermore, issues can be raised and addressed together. In this process, multiple perspectives are valued and there exists a willingness to re-think positions. Lastly, an interdependence holds everyone accountable to each other in terms of doing good work.

Participants were polled to identify values they experience regularly at UMBC, including community, support, work, collaboration, respect, success, trust, innovation, learning, diversity, culture, and ideas. They could choose up to twelve options. Participants submitted a total of 944 items and ranked them as follows: community (12%), collaboration (12%), diversity (10%), respect (10%), support (9%), work (9%), learning (8%), innovation (8%), ideas (7%), trust (6%), success (5%), culture (4%). When asked which of these values distinguish UMBC from other universities, participants identified diversity (18%), community (17%), collaboration (13%), innovation (11%), and respect (10%) as the top five values. They again were able to check up to twelve items. A total of 658 item checks were collected.

The values identified at the Retreat were both similar to and different from words faculty, staff, and students used to describe UMBC's culture in the [Strategic Planning Survey Results](#). The ten most frequent values describing UMBC's culture from the Survey in descending order were that UMBC is: diverse, inclusive, academic, innovative, open, nerdy, engaged, dynamic, unique, and collaborative. Diversity, innovation, collaboration, and openness were four major similarities between the Retreat responses and the Survey Results, while the remaining Survey responses were slightly different from the Retreat responses. It is important to note that students made up the largest group of Survey respondents, whereas students represented only a small portion of the Retreat participants.

## **Vision**

This session considered our vision and how well our vision statement inspires us to move from “Up-and-Coming” to “Best-in-Class.” Janet Rutledge, Dean of the Graduate School, presented participants with [elements of our vision](#), specifically the current UMBC vision statement and

data from the Strategic Planning Survey relating to progress made toward vision and progress made toward integrating teaching, research, and civic engagement. Participants worked collectively at their tables for thirty minutes and submitted one response per table that outlined their vision of UMBC in 2026 in comparison to 2013, as well as the values that would support these changes.

Participants also envisioned UMBC in 2026 to have a number of changes in terms of education. These include an increase in the student body size, particularly international and out-of-state student populations, smaller class sizes to foster retention, increases in the size of the graduating class, and offering more post-doctoral positions. Further changes are increased numbers of online and hybrid course offerings, a focus on learning instead of teaching, utilization of various instruction styles, such as tasked-based learning and evidence-based instruction, enhanced integration of the liberal arts, improvement of the link between the sciences and humanities, alignment of the curriculum with industry and social needs, and the creation of an honors university experience for all students, including mentoring and a public speaking course.

In terms of undergraduate education, participants envision that English Composition is taken in the first semester, writing is supported across the disciplines, history and language instruction is utilized to prepare students better, applied or experiential experience is required, and exploration of various disciplines is required before the selection of a major. Participants added that they would like to see additional programs, more support for transfer students, and an increase in financial assistance during studies.

Participants also envision changes to graduate education. These include the creation of graduate programs in all departments, more Ph.D. programs, daytime and summer course options, more assistantships, and more decentralized programs so that departments have more ownership.

Participants would also like to see UMBC attract graduates from Ivy League universities to attend our graduate school.

Research is an additional area on which participants focused. They envision special support for junior faculty in research endeavors, engagement of faculty and staff in research, the expansion of undergraduate researchers, the existence of research space other than labs, such as social collaboration centers for interdisciplinary research, the pursuit of innovative research, the acceptance of teaching as a research area, a focus on research that meets local, national and international needs, the recognition of UMBC's research nationally and internationally, and an integration of research with teaching. Participants would also like to see external research centers that are managed by UMBC.

Another difference concerns UMBC's reputation. By 2026, UMBC will have created its identity amongst University System of Maryland schools and will no longer be considered a commuter university. It will be a more prestigious and top-tier university with a top Carnegie Classification and a Nobel Laureate. UMBC will serve as a national model, particularly in the sciences and in bridging community college transfers. The university will be recognized for achievements in athletics, academics, and innovation. It will further be a destination for the arts. Its president will be as renowned as Freeman Hrabowski and the name of the university will have changed.



Participants also envisioned more substantial external collaborations. They expressed a desire for stronger community connections and collaborations with UMB and community colleges, a comprehensive focus on developing civic agency, and the pursuit of multidisciplinary approaches that address real problems. Academic learning communities could count as a general education requirement. External collaboration with industry and government would go beyond federal funding. Participants also envisioned growth of the Research Park and engagement with international alumni, universities, and businesses for stronger, global connections.

In terms of technology, participants envisioned improvements to PeopleSoft, more smart classrooms, the operation of an online university press, and the prevention of power outages. Structural infrastructure changes include sufficient classrooms, buildings for interdisciplinary work, a student services building, more residential housing, an events arena, a friendly college town, and retail centers. All buildings should be named for donors. Participants also envision expanded extracurricular offerings in the area of wellness, weekend life, cultural life, and athletics. They expressed the desire for UMBC to become a regional hub for the Performing Arts. Participants also suggested expanding the campus by acquiring CCBC and Spring Grove or merging with UMB to become UM Baltimore. In terms of transit, participants envision a reduction in the university's carbon footprint in order to become a green campus that is internationally recognized for its sustainability efforts. To do so, participants suggested improving public transportation to UMB, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., and building bike paths. Participants further envision a larger number of tenure-track positions filled with faculty who are diverse, internationally recognized, and established in their fields. Increases in start-up funding and funding in general, as well as funding for high-risk ideas, would support faculty.

Professional development opportunities and coaching for leadership positions for both faculty and staff would be in place.

Participants identified funding as one of the major drivers to support envisioned changes. They stated that UMBC needs an increase in state, corporate, and research grant funding. In addition, fundraising efforts need to be improved in order to have a successful Capital Campaign and to attract large endowments and donations. These monetary resources are necessary to provide scholarships and increase faculty resources.

Another driver is infrastructure. Participants posited that UMBC needs new and improved facilities, such as more instructional buildings, an events center, and a theater. Related to these changes are improvements to technology, and advances in green initiatives.

A third driver is innovation. Participants described UMBC as creative, scrappy, and adaptive. Utilizing these characteristics, UMBC should expand on innovative approaches to teaching, consider the appropriate balance between face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses, and introduce more programs that meet the needs of society.

An additional driver is broader engagement and collaborations internally and externally. Internally, participants identified interdisciplinary efforts, collective conversations and prioritization, and integration of athletics into the UMBC community as drivers. Externally, they suggested local and global partnerships with agencies and other institutions, such as UMB and UMCP, as well as engagement with and positive impact on local communities, such as Arbutus,

Catonsville, Baltimore, Annapolis, and Washington, D.C. as drivers. One submission suggested that UMBC should merge with UMB.

Participants argued that UMBC's name recognition will serve as a driver. It is thereby essential to tell UMBC's story to brand the university based on student successes and to capitalize on those successes. UMBC will also become a more exciting place because of community engagement, athletic recognition, and cultural events. With increased name recognition, UMBC will be able to attract more out-of-state students.

In addition, participants identified changes needed concerning faculty, staff, and students to support achieving UMBC's vision. They noted that there needs to be an increase in the number of faculty and staff, as well as an increase in professional development opportunities, mentoring, and leadership training. For staff, a clear career track has to be established. In terms of junior faculty, there should be more support to enable the production of scholarship and aid in the subsequent securing of grants. Faculty in general should seek external research funding to expand research, while still ensuring excellence in undergraduate education. There should be emphasis on teaching researchers, and those who engage in research should be treated preferentially in terms of promotion and tenure. More research will attract more people to campus and will bring more grants. Faculty should also be engaged in innovation and departments should have more ownership in designing graduate curricula.

Participants also named a number of adjustments in terms of students. For one, UMBC should focus on attracting more talented students. There should also be better support systems for students. Everyone should have an active learning and capstone experience. Graduate education

should further put more emphasis on research. Upon graduation, students should find careers in academia, industry, and government, particularly as State Senators and Representatives.

Participants identified the following values as supportive of these changes: flexibility, inclusion, diversity, ambition, compassion, generosity, transparency, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, innovation, excellence, hard work, and a commitment to people. They further stated that UMBC's focus on student success, student engagement, high quality teaching and research, civic agency, community engagement and partnerships, shared governance, and a shared vision support the proposed changes. Furthermore, participants argued that loyalty to the institution and increased development opportunities are key.

### **Focus Areas**

This session attempted to identify criteria that UMBC should use for selecting topics for [focus areas for planning](#). Provost Rous presented participants with Strategic Planning Survey data relating to UMBC's performance in research, graduate education, undergraduate education, civic engagement, and technology transfer. The Provost showed highest ranking focus areas by faculty, staff, and students and ranking of focus areas by high, medium, and low priority. Participants discussed focus areas that most impacted achieving our vision and why; why areas with low rankings may have ranked low, and how they may nevertheless support excellence; and any additional focus areas that were not covered in the Strategic Planning Survey. They particularly answered two questions: 1) What criteria should we use in selecting a limited number of topics for focus areas? and 2) Assuming that undergraduate education, research, and graduate education are fundamentals that must be addressed in the planning process, what additional focus areas will be drivers of our future success and why? This discussion occurred

collectively at participant tables for forty-five minutes, and each table submitted one collective response.

In terms of the criteria that should be used in selecting focus area topics, respondents suggested that topics should contribute to advancement and growth, while simultaneously reflecting UMBC's interests, values, mission, vision, and goals. We need to imagine our future students and their educational needs. Related to this discussion is the desire for focus area topics to move beyond traditional academic practices, structures, and models. Participants further stated that the topics should be broad enough to leave room for changing priorities that cannot be anticipated, yet specific enough so that there is a tangible aim or goal. Criteria should further support UMBC in cultivating and expanding our reputation. In this regard, respondents suggested a focus on our distinctive identity that is created in part by interdisciplinary work and problem-based pedagogy. They further stated the necessity of aligning with University of Maryland System, state, national, and global goals and challenges to assure relevance and increase our reputation. The topics should also be geared toward encouraging collaborations and partnerships with other universities, such as UMB, smaller institutions, and industry. Additionally, focus areas should address graduate education and student retention and success, as well as the retention of faculty and staff. Respondents also noted that topics should be transformative, complementary, tangible, measurable, sustainable and inclusive of all constituencies. Finally, they requested a continuous re-evaluation of these topics, the creation of a common language around these topics, and a desire for accountability.

Regarding focus areas in addition to research and undergraduate and graduate education, participants suggested that there should be emphasis on financial, human, and physical resources

for faculty, staff, and students. These resources should provide transition strategies, professional development, training opportunities, and support services, such as mentoring, to improve retention and graduation. Of concern were the improved integration of students other than residential students and the creation of a more family friendly university. A proposed second focus area is globalization/internationalization/diversification. In this regard, participants suggested hiring diverse faculty and staff, recruiting the best students, and incorporating diversity in the curriculum. Innovation marks a third proposed focus area. Participants mentioned interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaboration, rethinking of research, incorporation of new learning styles and new types of literacy, integration of teaching and research, and sustainability as possible areas for innovation. An additional proposed focus area concerns infrastructure, such as transportation, parking, facilities, equipment, and technology. Furthermore, participants identified finance as a focus area. This area should address alumni investment, fundraising, and endowment. Finally, there should also be a focus on engagement with the public both on and off-campus via co-curricular activities, athletics, civic engagement, community partnerships, University of Maryland Baltimore partnerships, and social and economic entrepreneurship.

## **Conclusion**

The University Retreat represents one of many interactive strategic planning conversations embedded in UMBC's new strategic planning process. The rich data that this engaged and active retreat audience provided will inform the next stage of the strategic planning process. Over the next two years, there will be many additional opportunities for continued conversation. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Strategy Groups will be responsible to create these

opportunities for broad, robust campus engagement. Please follow the process on the [UMBC Strategic Planning website](#).

## **Appendices**

Theme Team Presentations:

[Data Gallery; Environment Scan: Challenges](#)

[Environmental Scan: Opportunities; Values; Vision; Focus Areas](#)