December 20, 2012

TO:                  The UMBC Community

FROM:             Freeman Hrabowski, President

                        Philip Rous, Provost

                        Lynne Schaefer, Vice President for Administration & Finance

RE:                  Shared Services Centers

Many of you know that we recently created a task force to study the concept of shared services centers (SSCs).  We have heard from a number of you with questions and concerns about the possible impact of this concept on individual units and people.  We want to emphasize our continuing commitment to supporting faculty, staff and students, consistent with UMBC’s guiding principle of putting people first – a key principle we have followed the past five years in addressing challenging fiscal circumstances.  It is important to point out that the task force’s goal is not to reduce current staffing levels, but rather to consider ways in which we can assist and support more effectively our faculty, staff, and students.

As a campus, we share an understanding that our administrative staff and infrastructure provide support that is critical to achieving UMBC’s mission and ensuring our current and future success as a community.  Our growth in enrollment and externally sponsored research, together with the launch of innovative initiatives, pose increased challenges to the effective management of all aspects of our business operations and finances.  As we continue to grow, shared services potentially could enhance the effectiveness of support we provide for educational and research activities, while recognizing our currently thin staffing levels.  We have made a commitment to the Board of Regents to strengthen both our administrative infrastructure and the support we give to existing staff in order to ensure that we are prepared to address future challenges, and prevent past problems from recurring.

Our continued commitment to shared governance and inclusion will be an important part of this exploratory process, and of any subsequent planning or developmental activities that occur related to shared services.  The SSC task force has been charged with gathering information about the various models of shared services, including those developed by research universities similar to UMBC.  The task force will be visiting other campuses with shared services centers to study the best practices of this approach.  All interested campus stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input on how we will move forward with shared services centers.  The task force will be reaching out to the campus in a variety of ways, including town hall meetings in early 2013, establishing additional groups (for example, an administrative staff advisory group), and meetings with department chairs and faculty.  Incorporating campus input, the task force will issue a report of its findings in late February.  As we move forward in this process, we will be sure to communicate regularly with the campus community.