A VISION FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF EVANSVILLE

JANUARY 2013
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The vision of the University of Evansville is to be an innovative institution of global reach and reputation where students develop knowledge, skills, and wisdom to lead and serve. To ensure the realization of this vision, we have been engaged with a variety of constituencies in a comprehensive discussion of our future. Central to these conversations has been the development of strategic and master facilities plans that have assisted in the identification and prioritization of ways in which UE can become an even greater university.

Our strength is that we move forward building on a solid platform of demonstrated excellence. UE is recognized as one of the most outstanding institutions in the Midwest, and our academic quality and reputation continues to grow. Many of our programs have earned national honors and well-deserved reputations for their depth and rigor, and our graduates continue to distinguish themselves as they move into their respective fields and communities. UE’s recent announcement of The Big Freeze – a bold step to address concerns about affordability and post-graduation outcomes – has received extensive and favorable national attention. Moreover, the level of energy and excitement about our future direction is palpable. We are, in short, positioned for success.

As with any great university, UE has multiple directions in which it might move, but we recognize that our success depends on setting clear and compelling priorities. We must focus on those objectives that are critical to our core mission and have the greatest potential to make the University a singular example of exemplary post-secondary education.
Our strategic plan, *Transforming Tomorrow: Our Students, Our University, Our World*, the recently completed Facilities Master Plan, and conversations with many constituents at UE have identified the following priorities for the University:

I. **Transform the learning environment.**

Facilities improvements that would have the most dramatic impact on the core academic mission of the University include renovations of the Bower-Suhreinhich Library and Clifford Memorial Library, Hyde Hall, and Graves Hall. We need, as well, to improve our performing arts spaces to support the widely acknowledged strength of our programs in theatre and music. The University has a well-deserved reputation as an institution with a remarkable faculty whose commitment to undergraduate education is the hallmark of the UE experience. We must now ensure that the physical facilities that support their efforts match the quality of the people who work within them.

II. **Build a robust and rich curriculum and co-curriculum.**

The competition for students in today’s higher education marketplace is intense, so UE must be able to offer curricular opportunities that build on the demonstrated value of our existing liberal arts and preprofessional programs. Our faculty is vital to the success of such efforts. We are, in truth, only as good as those who teach here, for they are at the heart of the enterprise, challenging and nurturing our students to grow more than they thought possible. Central to our growing excellence, in addition, is our commitment to becoming an even more international place of learning, with expanded opportunities for study abroad and a larger number of international students on campus. Moreover, our curriculum must be complemented by co-curricular opportunities that differentiate the University from comparable colleges and universities. UE’s existing strengths can be exploited to develop nationally-recognized programs in experiential education, undergraduate research, and global health. We have, as well, a terrific opportunity to build a career support program that situates UE as a leader in preparing students for productive and meaningful lives after graduation.

III. **Enhance and sustain high quality student and residential life.**

The University must become a place that has a compelling physical presence and offers a campus experience of distinctive richness. The Carson Center has served honorably as a wellness and fitness venue, but is in dire need of substantial upgrade and expansion. Indeed, the entire campus community will benefit from such an enhancement, not only due to the health benefits resulting from fitness activities, but also because such a center becomes a place where the multiple constituencies on a modern university campus come together. We recognize as well that a residential campus must have modern and attractive student housing facilities. Our current
portfolio of Village housing units, for example, is much in need of replacement with housing options that reflect the ways today’s students live and study. UE’s streetscapes also represent an opportunity to transform the physical environment on and around the campus into a more attractive and inviting area. Campus life would be enriched by making Neu Chapel better able to accommodate programs that support our mission as an institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church and the growing diversity of our student body. And, as an NCAA Division I institution, UE signals that it is committed to excellence at the highest national level; we must have athletics facilities and programs that make it likely that our student-athletes will succeed.

IV. Tell the UE story.

If we are to succeed in attracting high quality students willing to pay a fair price for a UE education, we must make an affirmative and compelling case for choosing the University. We know that our stakeholders – alumni, friends of the University, faculty, staff, and the Evansville community – hold us in very high regard. Now we must share this story with the world. We have created the institutional capacity to do so and are energetically implementing a well-defined marketing plan; we must secure additional resources to sustain and expand this effort.
I. Transform the Learning Environment.

The University of Evansville’s academic spaces must reflect and extend the distinctive learning opportunities available to our students. Prospective students, in particular, expect high quality academic and non-academic facilities; enhancing these assets enables UE not only to create a learning environment of superior character, but also to meet our enrollment goals, strengthen the UE brand, and attract motivated, high-achieving students.

1. Bower-Suhrheinrich Library and Clifford Memorial Library

The library is the beating heart of a great university. In the context of higher education today, libraries are the physical and digital gathering places for eclectic learning communities. The University of Evansville Libraries provides a wealth of information resources and services that support the curricular and research programs of the University. Resources range from traditional library collections and individualized reference assistance to access to full text databases. These assets include more than 275,000 bound volumes of books and periodicals, access to approximately 50,000 scholarly journals, and extensive audio and visual resources. Providing inviting spaces (both quiet areas and group study rooms) and possibly changing the orientation of the building entrance to face the social hub of campus, Ridgway University Center, will create the ideal environment for community study and scholarship to flourish, benefiting both the academic and social dimensions of life at UE.
2. Hyde Hall

Adjacent to Olmsted Administration Hall, Hyde Hall and Shanklin Theatre are visible from the Sesquicentennial Oval, which is the gateway to the University. Shanklin Theatre is home to UE’s world-class theatre program and is often the first destination of campus tours. The University of Evansville is known throughout the country and abroad for its premier undergraduate theatre programs. Hyde Hall is also a core academic facility, with classes from a variety of disciplines meeting there. Similar to what was done with great success in the Schroeder Family School of Business Administration Building, Hyde Hall must be renovated to create flexible and active learning spaces, equipped with academic technology necessary for on-site and distributed learning.
3. Graves Hall

Graves Hall, home of UE’s highly regarded physical therapy program, includes the innovative Dunigan Movement Analysis Lab. The University of Evansville is one of only 38 universities in the world offering a Doctor of Physical Therapy program, which each year receives more than 100 applications from around the world. This is not surprising, given that employment of physical therapists is expected to increase faster than any other occupation over the next decade.

Sustaining this core strength of the University requires that Graves Hall be enhanced to maintain state-of-the-art capabilities. At present, however, this facility has significant limitations. The professional degree labs are half the necessary size to meet increasing enrollment, which often exceeds 50 students per class. Only one classroom has host-capacity for more than 40 students, but this room remains crowded and lacks access to power for individual computers. The building also lacks adequate handicap-accessible restrooms, seminar/meeting spaces, private spaces to ensure student-patient confidentiality, and storage for lab equipment. Updating Graves Hall’s laboratories, common spaces, and resources will ensure the high quality education students expect and deserve. Importantly, such enhancements will also have a positive impact on visiting prospective students and professionals.
Graves Hall

View looking northwest of Graves Hall’s relationship to campus
4. Performing Arts Center

An area of great opportunity for the University is enrichment of our performing arts facilities. Development of the Facilities Master Plan made clear that current performing arts facilities do not adequately meet the needs of our theatre and music programs – programs whose quality attracts talented students from around the nation and abroad. Features of this named facility could include larger seating capacity (1,000 - 1,200) than is currently available, additional rehearsal and teaching studios, “black box” rehearsal and performance spaces, gallery spaces, offices for music and theatre faculty and staff, and additional classrooms. This facility would provide a venue for cultural and intellectual activities of great benefit to the University and our region. It would, moreover, have a stunning impact during prospective student tours, new student orientation, community events, and theatrical/musical presentations.
II. Build a Robust and Rich Curriculum and Co-Curriculum.

Though high quality facilities are instrumental to effective teaching and learning, the curriculum and programs that complement it are the core of the UE experience. We must ensure that our students are well-prepared for life after graduation, and the best way to do that is to make available to them experiential and research opportunities during their time at the University, and to encourage and facilitate career exploration. We must also seek new intersections between areas of substantial academic strength and our growing commitment to international engagement.

1. Endowment for Faculty Development and Support

Outstanding facilities and programs matter, but are of little ultimate value if UE does not recruit, support, and retain a faculty of distinguished teachers and talented scholars. Our students invariably report that the most transformative element of their UE experience is their relationships with faculty members. Our professors are passionate about their craft and committed to creating a challenging learning environment, using both traditional and new pedagogical approaches. We are, however, limited in our ability to support their efforts through market-competitive compensation, travel and research support, offering incentives for curricular innovation – indeed, the myriad ways in which we show our faculty we recognize and value their role at UE. It is especially important that we endow these efforts so that we can assure regular and sustained faculty support.

2. International Engagement

UE’s international identity and reputation – highlighted by the world-class Harlaxton program – is a distinctive strength. A remarkably high proportion of UE students study abroad, and our international student population is larger than might be expected at a university of our size. We know that building on this existing strength represents an opportunity to differentiate ourselves from the large number of institutions for whom international programs are peripheral to their core activities.
We seek to make the University a national leader among master’s comprehensive institutions for the quality and breadth of our global programming. To do so will require reaffirming our commitment to Harlaxton, expanding study abroad opportunities, recruiting more international students, and increasing faculty and student exchanges around the world.

3. Center for Career Development

The University of Evansville is dedicated to supporting personal, academic, and professional student development, including career exploration and employment assistance, often leveraging UE connections with alumni and employers. Innovative and inventive strategies that identify pathways to success, coupled with superior quality in curricula and instruction, provide a maximum return on a student’s investment in his or her education. The former Office of Career Services and Cooperative Education has been substantially expanded and renamed the Center for Career Development. This new office marries existing career resources with new initiatives that will make UE a national leader in student career exploration. The center will organize its work around programs assisting students at all points in their UE experience, from entry to exit. These programs include the Career Advantage Program, which provides pre-admission career inventories for every prospective student, and our Advanced Career Education Certificates to increase job-readiness and competition in the workforce. Following graduation, our newly minted alumni become part of UE Connect, a network of graduates, alumni, and employers designed to help with job searches and facilitate transitions to new communities. The Center for Career Development is a concrete and substantial investment in student development, which we see as fundamental to success in a challenging and often unpredictable economy. Sustaining this effort will require a substantial resource investment on the part of the University and its supporters.

4. Center for Intensive Experiential Education

In today’s turbulent world and vocational marketplace, a university of excellence must provide multiple and diverse opportunities for experiential learning. To this end, UE proposes to develop a Center for Intensive Experiential Education. This center will foster entrepreneurial spirit in business and engineering, and through collaboration with regional businesses and faculty mentors, students will learn to produce professional-grade results by seeking out commercial opportunities, mastering technological challenges, and confronting and solving critical societal problems. This program will benefit students in academic programs across the campus, ranging from theatre and visual communication to nursing and physical therapy. As such, it will serve as a powerful inducement for talented students from an array of fields to come to UE.
5. UExplore Undergraduate Research Program

Undergraduate research with faculty mentors is an especially powerful way for students to develop skills essential for personal and professional success. The UExplore Undergraduate Research Program provides exceptional summer research opportunities under close faculty mentoring, often becoming the centerpiece of our students’ academic life. Expansion of this program has been hindered by limitations of staff resources and administrative support. We intend to meet these needs through creation of a program endowment that will fund staff support and resource assistance for faculty research supervisors.

6. Institute for Global Public Health

Following the successful model of the Institute for Global Enterprise in Indiana, we envision creation of an Institute for Global Public Health, uniting students of nursing, physical therapy, engineering, business, physical sciences, social sciences, and mathematics in outreach and service to the global community. Under the leadership of a new director, the institute will provide multidisciplinary technical expertise, combining public health perspectives and business acumen, and allow students to apply academic knowledge in an experiential context. Because public health problems extend beyond traditional geographic or national boundaries, the Institute for Global Public Health will build upon the strengths of our varied health programs in order to strengthen campus efforts toward increasing internationalization.
III. Enhance and Sustain High Quality Student and Residential Life.

At UE, much learning takes place beyond the formal classroom. Indeed, the entire campus is an environment that promotes personal growth and reflection about how to live a rich and meaningful life. Creating such a fertile environment requires attention to the infrastructure that supports daily campus life, including fitness and health, student housing, and our streetscapes. We must also be attentive to the non-academic needs and goals of our students and how the facilities and programs of the University support them.

1. Wellness and Fitness Center

Our conversations among a wide variety of campus constituencies revealed a strong desire for enhanced wellness and fitness facilities. Our current facility, the Carson Center, is heavily over-subscribed and is clearly lacking many of the basic elements of fitness centers at peer institutions. A center that mirrors the overall excellence of the University would be one that is a gathering place for students, faculty, staff, and alumni – thus becoming an integral and compelling part of the campus and surrounding community. Our intention for such a center is to go beyond typical fitness and recreational activities to provide a flexible and state-of-the-art space for academic activities, as well as nutrition and other healthy lifestyle educational programs. The facility would create a remarkable opportunity for enrichment of our health science programs, as it could include an outpatient clinical site for inter-professional use (nursing, physical therapy, exercise science, etc.) that is open to the community, staffed by professional faculty members, and offers hands-on simulations for UE physical therapy and nursing students.
Wellness and Fitness Center
2. Campus Housing

Relationships and individual character are formed throughout college life. Living on campus provides an exciting opportunity for students to enrich their college experience, and campus accommodations are powerful recruiting and reputation-building tools. As an institution committed to sustaining a vital and energetic residential community, student housing must not only be of high quality, but be integrated with our student life programming and supported by a committed residential life staff. In short, taking stock of our housing facilities offers an unusually good opportunity to establish a student housing environment that promotes personal growth and campus integration.

The Villages are apartments and houses purchased from private owners and designated for upperclassmen. Many of these buildings are in poor physical condition and do not effectively support community and college living. Though they lack curb appeal and do little to enhance the neighborhood or the University’s environs, the appeal of apartment-style living means that they remain a popular living option for students. Over the next five years, we plan to fundamentally improve Village housing by collaborating with third-party developers to construct new townhouse properties on Walnut Street and Weinbach Avenue. These efforts will add more than 100 beds, and will be designed to be aesthetically consistent with the campus and surrounding neighborhoods.

We need also to renovate and refresh Hughes Residence Hall, our oldest residence facility. It was built in 1958 and has undergone only one limited renovation (in the 1980s). Hughes has no air conditioning and has original built-in furniture in the Wing rooms. A new or substantially renovated Hughes Residence Hall would create opportunities for implementing new living/learning communities that have proven effective on other campuses. The new facility would also be designed for universal access to support those students who have mobility challenges and to meet the changing needs of future residents and programs.
Campus Housing

View looking northwest of West Village building sites at the intersection of Rotherwood and Walnut
3. Reinvigorated Streetscapes

A strong and connected campus community, intellectually and physically, encourages personal transformation and increases access to opportunities for self-discovery and intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical growth. Such developmental experiences create and cultivate student satisfaction and affinity. For too long, Walnut Street has acted as a barrier, separating one part of campus from the other. UE will unify the campus by working with the City of Evansville to change this heavily traveled thoroughfare into an appealing plaza connecting the Ridgway University and Carson Centers. Traffic will continue to use the street, but it will be safer for pedestrians, and the street could be closed for special occasions and major events. These improvements will foster a close-knit campus community and bridge the gap between the academic and athletic sides of campus. We are encouraged by the positive feedback received from city leaders, neighborhood residents, and other stakeholders at preliminary meetings held to discuss this proposal.
Reinvigorated Streetscapes
Looking southwest at Walnut-Weinbach intersection
4. Neu Chapel

As an institution affiliated with the United Methodist Church, UE has long seen Neu Chapel as an integral part of the campus community. The University is committed to providing opportunities and sacred spaces for all of our students to explore questions of faith and religious practice, though the size and function of the current chapel limits these activities. Our Office of Religious Life has been a leader in encouraging the community to appreciate the necessity of mutual understanding and respect in an interfaith context and has developed plans for an Institute for International and Interfaith Connections. Such an entity is especially relevant in an academic community that includes a considerable number of international students. In addition, we are exploring the creation of a campus labyrinth to enrich the spiritual lives of all in the community.
5. UE Athletics

Intercollegiate athletics is a vital and enduring part of UE’s identity. It is critical that the Purple Aces athletics program maintain a standard of success consistent with the academic quality of the University. To do so, we must ensure that we continue to recruit and support talented and committed student-athletes and provide opportunities for their academic and athletic success. This will require substantial philanthropic support; the recently completed Fifth Third Bank Basketball Practice Facility is a wonderful example of what can be accomplished with the support of those committed to the success of our athletics programs. New resources will be used to ensure that our facilities are sufficient to support an NCAA Division I athletics program, to maintain equity for men’s and women’s sports, and to increase our ability to identify and bring to UE prospective student-athletes able to succeed on and off the playing field.
IV. Tell the UE Story.

Our research shows that UE’s reputation among those who know us is remarkably positive. Our retention rates are high and getting higher, and our alumni, in particular, are well aware of the transformations that take place at UE. Our reputation, however, is not so well-established that those less familiar with the University share such positive perceptions. We have, in the vernacular of marketing professionals, a “neutral” reputation; prospective students and their parents, and those who might support UE, are less likely to be aware of the high return on investment that will result from attending or supporting the University. This must change if UE is to prosper. Accordingly, we have created a new office of marketing and communications, recruited a dynamic leader, and are moving to implement an ambitious and compelling campaign to better tell the UE story. Sustaining this momentum will require a substantial resource commitment.
What Will It Cost?

Listed below is a rough estimate of the costs associated with each of the initiatives and projects described in this vision for the University of Evansville. Actual costs will vary, perhaps substantially, depending on the eventual scope and character of each item as planning becomes more fully refined.

I. Transform the Learning Environment
   - Bower-Suhrheinrich Library renovation $2 to $3 million
   - Hyde Hall classroom renovation $10 to $14 million
   - Graves Hall lab space expansion $3 to $5 million
   - Performing Arts Center $10 to $20 million

II. Build a Robust and Rich Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
   - Center for Career Development $3 to $5 million
   - Center for Intensive Experiential Education $2 million
   - UEExplore Undergraduate Research $2 to $5 million
   - Institute for Global Public Health $2 to $3 million

III. Enhance and Sustain High Quality Student and Residential Life
   - Wellness and fitness center $15 to $20 million
   - Campus housing $10 million
   - Reinvigorated streetscapes $1 to $2 million
   - Neu Chapel $2 million
   - UE athletics $4 million

IV. Tell the UE Story
   - Marketing and communications $3 million
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