



# OUR UMBC

A Strategic Plan For Advancing Excellence

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Preface
- 3 Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members
- 5 University Mission and Vision
- 6 How To Read This Report

## FOCUS AREAS

- 7 The Student Experience
- 9 Collective Impact In Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement
- 11 Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy
- 13 Community and Extended Connections

## PREFACE

With this plan, our UMBC community focuses on strategic steps toward the next level of inclusive excellence. The plan honors our founding commitment to serve the citizens of Maryland and welcome people of all backgrounds into the life of the university. It builds on our achievements as a selective, public research university strongly connected with the economic and civic life of the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland.

The plan is directional and broad, providing a focused, complementary set of goals, strategies, and recommendations to guide faculty, staff, students, and alumni as we further UMBC's evolution as a nationally and internationally recognized public research university. The plan addresses four focus areas selected by the UMBC community as fundamental elements of academic excellence:

- The Student Experience
- Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement
- Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Community and Extended Connections

Wide participation across the campus characterized each major phase of planning activity, from the "planning to plan" design stage (2012-2013) to stakeholder and best practices research (2013-2014) to strategy group recommendations (2014-2015). A set of Guiding Principles for Planning, developed by the campus community and endorsed during the 2013 University Retreat, established standards for the process addressing such areas as analysis, campus engagement, alignment with UMBC's mission and vision, and fit with University System of Maryland (USM) and state goals.

Faculty, staff, undergraduate students, graduate students, and alumni were represented on the 24-member Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) and in the four strategy groups charged to research and develop the recommendations central to the plan. There were more than 70 opportunities for members of the campus community, including representatives of each of the shared governance groups, to provide feedback via surveys, face-to-face gatherings, and online. Across these varied methods, more than 5,000 community engagement interactions occurred through the process. Feedback from these interactions was steadily summarized and shared with the SPSC.

The plan's recommendations are supported by extensive institutional and external research conducted by each strategy group. This summary document provides links to full narratives that discuss the background research and reasoning that informed each group's conclusions.

The process also included assessment by a Foundations Work Group of elements necessary to effectively support current activities and enable advancement in the areas of: people, facilities, resources, information technology, and sustainability. Opportunities and challenges identified by this group of internal, subject-matter experts complement many of the strategy group recommendations in this draft report. The valuable work of this group is available to inform implementation.

Plan implementation is the responsibility of the University's Council of Vice Presidents and Deans, reporting to the provost and the president, and working in consultation with the campus community and shared

governance groups. The Council will develop multi-year operational plans, link planning to budget, and provide a transparent process for periodic progress reports and tracking. It is important to note that while this report stops short of recommending particular operational action items, it does include measures of success that can be utilized for monitoring progress toward objectives and for continuous assessment.

By design, the plan does not use current or anticipated resources to limit UMBC's vigorous pursuit of inclusive academic excellence. At the same time, those who worked on the plan were mindful that both people and financial resources are critical to achieving goals. Forward momentum in the focus areas depends upon strong enrollments, continued improvement in student success, and growth in research funding, strategic partnerships, and alumni engagement. Also, by design, the plan does not set any enrollment targets. Enrollment is considered to be an asset to be strategically managed to achieve objectives.

Finally, consistent with a campus culture that emphasizes innovation and broad engagement in the rapidly changing world around the university, the plan's goals and objectives do not preclude pursuit of other opportunities that emerge.



Philip T. Rous, Provost



Bruce J. Walz, Professor, Emergency Health Services and Past Chair, Academic Planning and Budget Committee

## STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

2013 - 2015

### Co-Chairs

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**Philip Rous**

Provost and Senior Vice President  
for Academic Affairs

**Bruce J. Walz**

Professor, Emergency Health  
Services and Past Chair, Academic  
Planning and Budget Committee

**Kathleen Carroll**

Associate Dean, Faculty Affairs, and  
Past President, Faculty Senate

### Members Representing Shared Governance Groups

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**Max Barnhart**

SGA Representative

**Dottie Caplan**

President, Non-Exempt Staff Senate,  
and Executive Administrative  
Assistant, College of Natural and  
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**Dan Miller**

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**Sarah Shin**

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Education, and Co-Director, M.A.  
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**Laila Shishineh**

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### Additional Members

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**Gregory Simmons '04**

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**Karl Steiner**

Vice President, Research

**Jack Sues '81 '95**

Vice President, Information  
Technology and Chief  
Information Officer

**Claire Welty**

Professor, CBEE and Director,  
Center for Urban Environmental  
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### Ex Officio Members

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Co-chair, Middle States  
Steering Committee

**Bennett Moe '88**

Past President, Alumni  
Association Board

**Ken Pittman '80**

President, Alumni Association Board

### Strategy Group Co-Chairs

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Vice President,  
Institutional Advancement

### University Mission

*Adopted by the University System of Maryland Board of Regents December 2010*

UMBC is a dynamic public research university integrating teaching, research, and service to benefit the citizens of Maryland. As an Honors University, the campus offers academically talented students a strong undergraduate liberal arts foundation that prepares them for graduate and professional study, entry into the workforce, and community service and leadership. UMBC emphasizes science, engineering, information technology, human services, and public policy at the graduate level. UMBC contributes to the economic development of the state and the region through entrepreneurial initiatives, workforce training, K-16 partnerships, and technology commercialization in collaboration with public agencies and the corporate community. UMBC is dedicated to cultural and ethnic diversity, social responsibility, and lifelong learning.

### University Vision

Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.

This report provides a concise summary of strategy group recommendations in four focus areas:

- The Student Experience
- Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement
- Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Community and Extended Connections.

The primary goal set by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee in its Charge to Strategy Groups appears at the beginning of each report.

Strategic goals within each focus area are numbered to facilitate reference only. The numbering does not imply priority.

Each objective is identified first by the goal with which it is aligned and second by a number representing sequence. For example, the objective designated 1.1 is the first objective under the first goal in the focus area.

Supporting material from strategy group reports detailing each group's research process, findings, stakeholder engagement, and conclusions can be found on [planning.umbc.edu](https://planning.umbc.edu).

A dashboard has been developed to track progress on university commitments and investments toward strategic planning goals and supporting objectives.

The implementation dashboard can be found on [planning.umbc.edu/dashboard](https://planning.umbc.edu/dashboard).



### PRIMARY GOAL

Create vibrant, exceptional, and comprehensive undergraduate and graduate student experiences that integrate in- and out-of-classroom learning to prepare graduates for meaningful careers and civic and personal lives.

### STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Increase degree completion and shorten students' time to degree.
2. Systematically improve the quality and consistency of academic advising and mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students.
3. Leverage the strength of UMBC's compositional diversity by increasing the cultural and global competencies of all students.
4. Continue to build a campus culture that creates, supports, and expects applied learning experiences that present a wide variety of options for all students (e.g., study abroad, internships, cooperative education, service learning, engaged scholarship, artistic performance, and teaching and graduate assistantships).
5. Promote the health and well-being of students as a foundation for academic and life success.

### SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Adopt a more efficient and effective approach to course planning, academic pathways, and scheduling to improve undergraduate and graduate student progression through academic programs.
- 1.2 Expand the amount, type and utilization of informal space on and off campus that is available to students to study together, collaborate on creative work, recreate, socialize, or interact with faculty and staff. These spaces should create opportunities for informal peer-to-peer communication and relationships that increase sense of community, retention, and graduation rates.
- 2.1 Better define expectations for advisers and peer mentors by examining successful models on campus for replication, and revise standards, training, and support accordingly.
- 3.1 Develop communities of practice that deliberately focus on developing skills, attitudes, and experiences that promote global and cultural competency. Consider adding global and cultural competency as the fifth area of student competency.
- 3.2 Increase significantly the diversity of tenure-track faculty.
- 3.3 Research student perceptions of staff diversity to better understand the effects of staff compositional diversity in the student experience and guide staff diversity priorities.
- 4.1 Increase support and incentives to improve the quality and variety of applied learning experiences so that every UMBC student engages in and reflects on a significant applied learning experience prior to graduation.
- 5.1 Improve student services to significantly increase students' satisfaction with hours, availability, and responsiveness of services used and needed by undergraduate and graduate students, including access to off-campus services, venues, and social opportunities.
- 5.2 Improve support for undergraduate and graduate students who feel overwhelmed and experience anxiety as a result of academic and career insecurity and poor emotional health.
- 5.3 Improve the promotion of campus activities (such as athletic, social, cultural, and performing arts events) to faculty, staff, and students in an energetic, holistic, and comprehensive fashion.
- 5.4 Work to increase students' pride in UMBC to higher levels.



**PRIMARY GOAL**

Elevate UMBC as a nationally and internationally recognized research university strongly connected with the economic and civic life of the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland. The key drivers in achieving this goal are: creating an inclusive environment for faculty, students, and staff; developing excellence in new intellectual frontiers; and fostering multidisciplinary and inter-institutional approaches that build research across the campus.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

1. Increase national prominence in selected multidisciplinary areas spanning the arts, engineering, humanities, information technology, natural sciences and mathematics, and social sciences. Potential focus areas for the development of multidisciplinary scholarship, creative activity, and research excellence include, but are not limited to, environmental studies, health, national security, data science, and civically engaged and global/transnational scholarship.
2. Increase UMBC's research prominence through sustained investment in faculty and staff hiring, retention, and development.
3. Position UMBC faculty to win prestigious national and international awards and honors for scholarship, creative activities, and research and grow UMBC's funded research portfolio to achieve annual research expenditures that consistently place the university among the top 150 institutions in the nation.

**SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 Vigorously promote a campus culture of multidisciplinary collaboration and multidisciplinary research, scholarship, and creative activity. Continue to encourage multidisciplinary activities by supporting interdisciplinary programs and centers.
- 1.2 Increase communication, information gathering/sharing, and training about opportunities related to scholarship, research, and creative activities.
- 2.1 Recruit, support, promote, and proactively retain a more diverse, research-active faculty at both the junior and mid-career levels to build research capacity, productivity, and excellence. Fully recognize the importance of creative activities, scholarship, and research, and where appropriate, technology transfer and commercialization, in hiring and promotion decisions and merit and workload processes.
- 2.2 Increase research productivity by attracting and recruiting outstanding doctoral students. This requires proactive recruitment efforts including targeted talent identification plans (to incentivize undergraduate students to consider UMBC), better incentives/financial support, as well as additional graduate assistant positions.
- 2.3 Increase incentives for internal and external collaborations by rewarding and recognizing cross-field and inter-institutional partnerships during merit calculations, review periods, and workload policy development.
- 2.4 Align faculty teaching and service expectations with faculty research activity. Efforts should be made to more effectively balance these expectations for research-active and non-research-active faculty by instituting variable teaching and service loads based on research activity, developing opportunities for research-related release time (including time to mentor research by undergraduate and graduate students), and better aligning research priorities with other campus responsibilities.
- 3.1 Improve infrastructure and support for research, creative activities, and scholarship by investing in state-of-the-art research facilities and equipment such as shared instrumentation, studio space, and library resources. As research infrastructure is improved and expanded, add qualified technical staff to support research laboratories, studios, arts venues, the library, grant support (pre- and post-award), etc.

**PRIMARY GOAL**

Develop innovative curricula and academic programs that support and enhance the success of our undergraduate and graduate students and prepare them for meaningful careers, lifelong learning, and engaged citizenship; and thereby enhance our position as a national leader in undergraduate and graduate education.

**STRATEGIC GOALS**

1. Provide exemplary support for educators in creating state-of-the-art undergraduate and graduate curricula delivered through innovative and effective approaches to teaching and learning.
2. Continue to build a culture of academic assessment to support our faculty as the primary drivers of continuous improvement in student learning outcomes.

**SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1 Enhance the capacity of the Faculty Development Center to provide support for research on and training in best pedagogical practices and transform it into the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).
- 1.2 Increase the size and diversity of full-time faculty and their engagement in first- and second-year student learning experiences.
- 1.3 Expand opportunities for advancement, prestige, and increased salaries for full-time lecturers.
- 1.4 Expand opportunities for advancement and professional development for part-time faculty.

- 1.5 Reappraise and update policy and practice to take into account the amount of faculty time and effort required to develop and deliver active learning and related innovative classroom practice.
- 1.6 Expand campus-wide capacity for graduate education, increasing graduate assistant stipends, providing pedagogical training, and increasing the availability of informal learning spaces.
- 1.7 Develop campus-wide policies and standards for technology use in instruction, including but not limited to online and hybrid course formats.
- 1.8 Provide state-of-the-art learning spaces, both formal and informal, which support both the best of traditional pedagogies and new evidence-based practices.
- 1.9 Reorganize the way classrooms are designed and redesigned to take full account of the perspective of classroom faculty and students with regard to space quality and usefulness.
- 2.1 Develop a robust internal information system and analytical capability that tracks student success and outcomes throughout students' careers at UMBC and beyond. The system should use broadly defined and comprehensive success measures determined through campus-wide discussions that take into account academic performance and competencies, student engagement on campus, and overall well-being. The success measures should be utilized in academic advising and be tied to student learning outcomes, teaching modalities/facilities, and support periodic academic-program review and biannual assessment processes. Employ information systems and analytics to establish campus-wide standards for interventions to support student success throughout students' careers at UMBC.
- 2.2 Develop a robust internal information system that tracks the number, quality, and utilization of formal and informal teaching spaces in relation to course offerings.



### PRIMARY GOAL

To build, nurture, and extend connections with diverse internal and external partners to enrich campus life, local neighborhoods, the state, and the surrounding region. To foster innovative problem-solving and responsible entrepreneurship through strategic partnerships with alumni, government agencies, businesses, and community-based organizations to create a sustainable and prosperous future for all.

### STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Promote a campus-wide culture that recognizes, supports, catalyzes, and celebrates collaboration and partnerships with groups at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels, including the K-12 education system.
2. Advance UMBC's regional reputation as a vital stakeholder in Maryland's innovation economy.
3. Strengthen UMBC's position as an anchor institution for the greater Baltimore metropolitan region.

### SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Adopt a common framework of best practices for developing and maintaining community connections and partnerships that includes ways to recognize and reward community connections and community-engaged scholarship.
- 1.2 Identify and support an individual or unit in the University that is responsible for maintaining an inventory of community connections and partnerships (including those involving local

and regional businesses) as well as facilitating cross-campus communication and collaboration in this area. Identify structures and processes to facilitate the sharing of this information with internal and external audiences.

- 1.3 Strengthen connections between alumni and the on-campus community that foster alumni success and pride while enhancing teaching and learning, the student experience, and community outreach and development.
- 1.4 Document and communicate UMBC's commitment to community connections and partnerships.
- 2.1 Develop a strategic plan for supporting entrepreneurship, social innovation, and technology commercialization efforts on campus, including means for increased collaboration among on-campus organizations sharing those concerns. The plan should also identify strategies that support undergraduate and graduate students' interests in entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and social venture creation.
- 2.2 Strengthen and grow UMBC's research and technology park, bwtech@UMBC, leveraging UMBC's strengths and alignment with state needs and opportunities.
- 2.3 Continue to address novel and important professional development and continuing education needs in Maryland through courses, programs, and services provided by the Division of Professional Studies (DPS) and UMBC Training Centers including UMBC programs offered at Shady Grove.
- 3.1 Establish a community-engagement action team to (a) develop short-term and long-term goals around high-impact issues in the Greater Baltimore region that play to campus strengths and (b) develop, enact, and monitor progress on a community-engagement plan to address the targeted issues.
- 3.2 Identify and maintain presence in strategically selected business and community associations.
- 3.3 Pursue with Baltimore County the designation of a Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise (RISE) Zone to support expansion of university-sponsored economic-development activities.
- 3.4 Use campus facilities (such as the campus event center) to leverage community connections and, where appropriate, to increase revenue.
- 3.5 Improve students', employees', and visitors' ability to know about and find campus services and activities of interest to them, using face-to-face, print, electronic, and online resources.