

## **The West Chester University *Plan for Excellence***

Since its establishment as a normal school in 1871 to meet the Commonwealth's need for well-prepared teachers, West Chester University has grown to become the third largest university and a major educational, cultural, and economic force in southeastern Pennsylvania. As a public, regional, comprehensive university, West Chester University's mission centers on preparing students for success in all aspects of their lives and responding to the educational and cultural needs of its service region. The *Plan for Excellence* represents the Strategic Planning and Accreditation Council's (SPAC) confidence that the University is poised to elevate significantly its success in fulfilling that mission. Accordingly, the plan is a celebration of the University's long and proud traditions, a reaffirmation of its mission to serve, first and foremost, the educational needs of its students and the Commonwealth, and a vision of excellence for what promises to be an exciting future.

The *Plan for Excellence* differs from previous university strategic plans in several important ways. First, it is based on the assumption that becoming a model of excellence for regional comprehensive universities requires major changes in perspectives, approaches, and ambitions. The plan focuses on transformational change, rather than merely a reordering of priorities. Because the committee views this characteristic of the plan as critical to understanding its nature and intent, further explanation is in order.

“Transformations” is a term typically used to designate marked change and should, accordingly, not be used loosely. No one wants or needs change—marked or otherwise—for the sake of change. Indeed, the planning committee deliberated for some time about whether the term was appropriate to identify the actions needed by an already highly successful university.

That deliberation and caution in moving to the term *transformations* was based on two factors. The characteristics essential for success as a higher-education institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will continue to include those that have always been critical—qualified faculty, curricula solidly grounded on traditional disciplines, students sufficiently prepared to deal with the subject matter of those curricula, and administrators and staff committed to providing a campus environment conducive to learning. West Chester University already has a rich heritage, strong traditions, and a long history of accomplishments related to each of these essential characteristics.

Even so, the internal and external scans underlying the recommendations in this plan provided constant reminders to the committee of the radical transformations that are occurring in the external environment of higher education in general and West Chester University in particular. Who, for example, could have imagined just two or three years ago that the Commonwealth would no longer provide the full costs of the “bricks and mortar” essentials of its publicly owned universities and, instead, require that they provide up to 50 percent of those costs? Who could have imagined that moderately low student/faculty ratios would no longer be held as a source of pride within the State System?

The contrast between the rapid, even radical, changes in the external environment to which the University must adapt and the much slower pace of change its internal constituents prefer, and even insists upon, became increasingly striking to the committee.

In those instances when there is evidence that an organization can improve, it must respond, and incremental improvement can be evidenced throughout the University. Nonetheless, in those instances in which rapid change, turbulence, and intense competition characterize the environment in which an organization is operating, transformational improvements must occur. The committee, ultimately, decided that the *Plan for Excellence* must note, with some urgency, those instances where transformational change is essential.

That same unprecedented pace of change in almost every sector of society was the basis of a second difference between this and previous plans that was thought to be critical by the committee. Although five-year plans are the tradition, predictions of future external states over that span of time are increasingly problematic. So, instead of prognosticating about long-term trends, the *Plan for Excellence* focuses on changes in practices and processes that are essential to prepare the University to flourish regardless of the specific, but inevitable and rapid, vicissitudes in the economic, political, and social forces that might affect its operating environment.

A third difference for the present plan compared to previous ones is that its utility—beyond the first year or so—is totally dependent upon the University's will to accomplish annual internal and external scans nearly as extensive as those underlying the plan's initial development.

Finally, quantifiable measures have been defined for the major goals of the *Plan for Excellence*. These measures, termed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), reflect conditions and outcomes critical to the success of the University over the long term. Many reflect the Performance Indicators (PIs) recently developed by the State System.

The beginning point for the *Plan for Excellence* is the vision it offers for the University.

### **The West Chester University Vision**

West Chester University will be a national model for excellence for public regional comprehensive universities and especially noted for:

1. undergraduate programs that actively engage students in connecting the life of the mind to the world in which they live and work
2. the responsiveness of its graduate and post baccalaureate programs to regional needs
3. its focus on providing lifelong-learning, technical, and applied skills essential to graduates' success now and in the future
4. a commitment by faculty, staff, and administrators to provide access and to serve effectively the educational needs of a diverse student body
5. its role as a leading educational and cultural resource and partner in fostering the economic, social, and cultural vitality of southeastern Pennsylvania

### **The Essential Transformations**

The central theme of the *Plan for Excellence* is that of quality, but quality more richly defined than has traditionally been the case. Much of the recent tension between academe and the public stems from higher education's tradition of defining quality in terms of "inputs" such as SAT scores, faculty credentials and their contributions as scholars (but not necessarily as teachers), and available resources. These are important but no longer sufficient criteria of quality for regional comprehensive universities. Further, because higher education is not monolithic, different institutions need to consider different components in their definitions of quality.

For public regional comprehensive universities, traditional definitions of quality continue to be important. Of equal importance is their responsiveness to regional needs and the access and success they provide for students, based not on who those students are as they enter the institution but on their ability to benefit from and improve their own and society's lot because of the educational opportunities they are afforded. Finally, the quality of regional comprehensive institutions is highly dependent on their resourcefulness in creating and making the best possible use of the resources available to them. It is upon these interrelated ideals and the transformations essential to their accomplishment, that the West Chester University *Plan for Excellence* is based.

## **Responsiveness Transformation**

**West Chester University will increase its responsiveness to the educational and cultural needs of its region.**

Southeastern Pennsylvania is the clear leader in the economic and population growth of the Commonwealth. Unprecedented opportunities exist now and for the coming decade for West Chester University to increase its and the State System's presence in and contributions to the most economically dynamic region of the Commonwealth.

- The number of students graduating from area high schools will grow some 14 percent between 2000 and 2009.
- Workplace transformations for 35- to 55-year-olds have created ongoing needs for increased skills and educational attainments.
- Economic growth, represented in terms of national occupational trends to which the University can be responsive, are particularly pronounced in southeastern Pennsylvania.
  - > 69 percent growth in computer sciences and mathematics jobs
  - > 36 percent growth in social sciences and recreation fields
  - > 29 percent growth in law and related fields
  - > 27 percent growth in health-science fields
  - > 26 percent in teaching

Some of the major goals and strategies essential to pursuing successfully both the opportunities represented by the economic growth and increased responsiveness to the region's needs are offered below for the purposes of illustration. As is the case for all of the transformations, the goals and strategies outlined for the responsiveness transformation are intended to provide, by example, a framework for the more specific actions that must be worked out annually by the affected units themselves.

### **R.1. Ensure responsive curricula and services, including more pre- and post baccalaureate, professional-growth opportunities and post baccalaureate certificate programs**

Systematically examining regional and national trends in student and employer needs and obtaining the views of area leaders through program advisory boards can help maintain both the quality and currency of programs. So too can a rigorous program review process that systematically assesses program quality, mission centrality, and costs; surveys alumni outcomes and satisfaction; and eliminates programs of limited quality or relevance.

### **R.2. Accommodate the needs of diverse learners by providing courses, programs, and services in a variety of formats and venues**

In 1990, when the University's total enrollment was 12,076, the majority (72 percent) of its students were degree-seeking 18- to 24-year-old undergraduates; the remaining 28 percent were nondegree and graduate students. Efforts are needed to come closer to approximating

that mix again in order for the University to respond to the needs of its region and work within in its current facilities limitations.

**R.3. Align teacher preparation programs with national accrediting, system, and state standards; the recommendations of major national reports such as those recently issued by the American Council on Education and the Pew Foundations; and regional and national K-12 needs**

Teacher education is a strong tradition and continues to be a central priority for the University. The University is committed to a comprehensive examination of all of its teacher preparation programs to ensure their alignment with the needs of the institution's K-12 partners and the suggestions of such seminal reports as the American Council on Education's *To Touch the Future: Transforming the Way Teachers are Taught* and Russell Edgerton's Pew Foundations *White Paper*. The University's teacher education graduates will be prepared to provide the new methods of instruction—a "pedagogy of engagement"—that Edgerton suggests are essential in order for future generations to deal effectively with the age of information.

**R.4. Expand the University's role as a center for the cultural arts in Chester County**

The University's School of Music has a long tradition of excellence, and its theater and art programs are gaining equal stature. Funding for a new School of Music and Performing Arts Center provides an unprecedented opportunity for the University to expand its partnerships in the arts and serve as a major cultural arts resource in its immediate service region. The 1,200-seat Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall, in the recently refurbished Philips Memorial Building, underwent a major renovation and reopened in January 2000. This state-of-the-art concert hall serves as the location for the University's speaker programs and Visiting Artist Series, as well as music, dance, and theater productions. The concert hall also serves as the home base for community groups including the Brandywine Ballet, the Kennett Symphony of Chester County, and the Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Ongoing discussions are taking place with other community profit and nonprofit cultural organizations.

**R.5. Increase opportunities for connections with and among alumni/ae**

Providing lifelong-learning opportunities for alumni demonstrates the University's ongoing commitment to its students and its responsiveness to the realities of a critical educational need.

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***Responsiveness Measures and Achievements/Initiatives Already Undertaken***

*West Chester University's nontraditional student enrollments will increase 10 percent by 2002-2003 (West Chester University Performance and Outcomes Plan [WCU POP], June 2000).*

*Science and technology majors will increase 2.5 percent annually through 2002-03 (WCU POP, June 2000).*

*The University will maintain its top-third ranking in the System on Praxis pass rates for its teacher education students (WCU POP, June 2000).*

- *The University's Pharmaceutical Product Development Program wins 1999 educational innovation Enterprise Award.*
- *The Technology and Electronic Commerce Master of Business Administration (TEC MBA) featured in the Philadelphia Business Journal, is the first such program in the region.*
- *The West Chester School of Education/Bartram partnership serves as a model of national recommendations regarding K-12 partnerships.*
- *West Chester University and the West Chester Area School District formalize their long-standing relationship by signing in fall 2000 an agreement for an "Alliance for the Future." The Alliance supports clinical training of teachers, extends professional development of veteran teachers, and sponsors collaborative research and inquiry.*
- *The GIS lab, Business Technology Center, and Center for Social and Economic Survey Research increase university regional presence and outreach efforts.*
- *The University's Business Technology Center helps local businesses win over \$52 million in government contracts.*
- *West Chester University students develop a Web site for the Barnes Foundation (Philadelphia Inquirer [Tech.life@Inquirer](mailto:Tech.life@Inquirer), July 27, 2000).*
- *The School of Music increases its presence within the community and the music industry through partnerships such as that with the Samuel Barber Foundation.*
- *University program reviews result in the elimination of some thirty programs of limited quality and mission centrality, as well as significant revisions for many more.*
- *Communicative Disorders models the potential of distance education via its interactive video program offerings to off-campus sites in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.*
- *The COLLAGE program, encouraging stronger, lifelong connections between the University and its alumni, continues to expand.*
- *The Community Music SPARK program collaboration between the School of Music and the West Chester Area School District inspires the next generation of musicians.*

## **Student Success Transformation**

**West Chester University will make student success its defining characteristic.**

The term "student success" refers to a fundamental change in the philosophy of higher education policy and practices. As the mission of institutions such as West Chester University has broadened because of changes in societal expectations and diversification in the students served, the "resource and reputation" model of academic excellence (referenced earlier as a focus on inputs) is insufficient. Stakeholders, particularly those for public colleges and universities,

demand evidence of the “value-added” benefits of higher education, both for students and the public at large. In addition, a more diverse set of students, coupled with the intense competition that is developing for attracting them, requires services more responsive to their needs, interests, and convenience. Regional comprehensive universities able to make a conscious shift from a provider-oriented focus (faculty, staff, and administrators and their interests) to one that centers more on learners will continue to thrive. Those that cannot will spend an inordinate amount of time deliberating their decline and who is to blame.

West Chester University has initiated many individual programs and activities directed at accomplishing a shift to a student success paradigm. However, a full commitment to the student success philosophy and the coordination, integration, and expansion of essential services it entails will require a transformation in the University’s organizational culture. The following goals are essential to that transformation.

### **S.1. Enhance curricula and instructional modes that actively engage learners in connecting theoretical and applied knowledge and improve the quality of their learning**

Russell Edgerton’s Pew Foundations *White Paper* referenced earlier makes a strong case for what he terms “engaged” learning, a concept that has gained considerable currency. Edgerton proposes that good educational practices engage students through action, application, and even emotional involvement in the learning experience. Among the recommended instructional transformations for promoting engaged learning and, ultimately, engaged professionals and citizens are: 1) Socratic exchanges; 2) collaborative learning; 3) in- and out-of-class problem-solving exercises ; 4) student-organized presentations of material in the classroom; 5) faculty-student discussions and independent exploration of additional material outside of the classroom; 6) guided opportunities to apply knowledge in community volunteer activities (e.g., “service learning”); 7) practicum, research, and internship experiences; and 8) changes in the role of faculty from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side.”

Vigorously applying good educational practices that increase student engagement is a strong antidote to the competition that campus-based programs face from “convenience” providers. Dramatic encroachments from those competitors have already occurred in some areas (e.g., the explosive growth of University of Phoenix business programs). Equally intense competition is likely in many other areas as other distance-education and virtual universities cater to the convenience preferences—whether realistic or not—represented by the following, undoubtedly apocryphal but no less sobering, anonymous student quote: “I’m only in school until it comes out on CD-ROM.”

Many of the needed transformations in instructional modes and practices are already occurring at West Chester University. More focused development and support should yield even greater benefits.

**S.2. Achieve greater student socialization into the academic culture, involvement in campus life, and integration of academic and co curricular programs**

A sense of connection and community is a major factor in student success. Certainly one of the advantages West Chester University offers is a strong residence hall program involving 90 percent of its first-time, full-time entering students. Most recently, learning communities within residence halls are being piloted. However, the University needs to find ways to increase connections and involvement for all, not just its resident, students.

**S.3. Improve the general education curriculum's focus on developing the skills and knowledge that provide a foundation for students' success in their majors, their careers, and their roles as citizens**

Each fall, more than 30 percent of the University's teaching resources typically are devoted to general education requirements. Those courses are critical in laying the foundation—furthered subsequently in major and elective courses—for producing graduates able to read and think critically, speak well, lead in the development and application of scientific and technological advances, and contribute to and serve as leaders in their communities.

A recently completed study found marked improvement in students' perceptions regarding the extent to which the general education curriculum is fulfilling its goals, and alumni consistently report that the general education curriculum has contributed to their success. Over the past year, a faculty task force has been working to define ways to address what many believe to be a continuing limitation of the curriculum—its lack of coherence. Again, while it is not the task of a strategic plan to outline specific actions, the coming year should mark significant progress in the implementation of suggestions for a revised general education curriculum, followed by rigorous examination of the effects of those changes.

**S.4. Integrate assessment into all curricula and co curricular programs and student services**

The University's recent progress on this front has been strong and must continue apace (see sidebar example).

**S.5. Strengthen the links between undergraduate academic and career advisement and programming**

Many students fail to understand that their education is an investment in their own human capital. Instead of focusing on the skills and knowledge that will most directly affect their future professional and personal accomplishments, many students pursue the baccalaureate degree itself as the “credential” guaranteeing their success.

The “human capital” model of advisement has particular relevance to students uncertain about, or unable to gain admission to, their preferred major. Many faculty fail to help students understand their educational choices as investments in their future because the faculty view the advisement role solely in terms of building or approving student course schedules. Complaints about advisement are a hardy perennial in higher education. It is time

to take those complaints seriously. In addition to the vigorous pursuit of engaged learning, as noted previously, good advisement can also provide a competitive advantage over convenience providers.

**S.6. Improve retention, graduation, and time-to-degree rates by assisting students during key transitional periods in their academic careers**

The University's first-to-second-year retention rates are consistently in the top 10 percent compared to those of its peers. Overall retention and graduation rates are also strong—consistently in the top 20 percent. Considerable stakeholder attention has focused recently on time-to-degree rates. Since there is always room for improvement, efforts continue to progress on these already strong rates, particularly for specific cohorts.

Task forces are examining factors related to lower retention rates at such critical periods as the second-to-third year transition. Among the factors under scrutiny are minority retention and graduation rates, the performance of transfer versus native students, and retention and graduation rates for students who enter the University with a major compared to those who enter without a declared major. While it is beyond the scope of a strategic plan to recommend specific actions, the fact that performance funding from the State System is now tied to these variables reinforces the need to move from the exploration to the action stage.

**S.7. systematically examine and apply processes and programs proven to reduce disparities in graduation rates between underrepresented minority and Caucasian students**

One of the central questions that needs to be addressed is, “What do we and others know, and are we acting upon what we know to improve retention and graduation rates for underrepresented minorities?” The University has completed several important studies with clear implications for its academic support services and admissions policies (see sidebar example).

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***Student Success Measures and Achievements/Initiatives Already Undertaken***

*West Chester University will maintain its placement within the top 10 percent of its national peers in second-year retention rates, and within the top 20 percent in graduation rates (WCU POP, June 2000).*

*The disparity in four-year retention and overall graduation rates between African-American and Latino students and those for Caucasian students will be reduced by at least 1 percent annually for academic years 2000-01 to 2002-03 (WCU POP, June 2000).*

*The College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) will be administered in fall 2000 to provide baseline measures on a number of dimensions, including student “engagement” in their learning. Trends will be quantified for subsequent administrations of the CSEQ that will occur on no less than a biennial basis.*

*The annual survey of a cohort of “five-year-out” alumni, measuring their satisfaction with their West Chester University experience and its contributions to their lives, will demonstrate continuing improvement in mean satisfaction ratings.*

- *Service-learning collaborations between academic and student affairs continue to offer ever-increasing opportunities for students to connect their classroom learnings to “real-world” problems and their solution.*
- *West Chester University students donate over 85,000 hours of community service during the 1999-2000 academic year*
- *Strong initial results from the multicultural student-mentoring program could merit its expansion and emulation with other populations.*
- *The summer reading assignment, instituted this past summer for incoming students, on the life and works of Frederick Douglass provides an introductory experience to the University’s academic culture and a potential beginning point for a more cohesive general education experience.*
- *A year-long faculty seminar on general education issues demonstrates the University’s commitment to improve and reform that curriculum and the complexities that doing so entails.*
- *A curriculum-integration faculty seminar now has some eighty “graduates,” and an even greater spread of effect. It could provide a model for programs centering on the exploration, collaborative application, and evaluation of alternative and innovative instructional modes—including technology-enhanced instruction—for promoting “engaged learning.”*
- *More than 90 percent of the University’s academic departments have submitted assessment plans for review; active data collection has begun in many of those departments. Student service areas of academic affairs are now required to develop assessment plans; assessment is now a major focus of the Division of Student Affairs.*
- *The College of Arts and Sciences “Department Scholars Project” is targeted at retaining high-ability students beyond the sophomore year by providing them with paid research experiences under the supervision of a faculty mentor.*

### **Diversity Transformation**

**West Chester University will strengthen its commitment to pluralism, access, equity, and a supportive campus climate for a diverse community of students, staff, faculty, and administrators.**

A diverse university community promotes a stimulating intellectual environment, increases its members’ understanding of different cultures and perspectives, and prepares students to live and work in a multicultural, global society. There can be no better preparation for the future. As a public institution, West Chester University has a responsibility to provide access to previously excluded groups and embrace all forms of diversity including race, religion, age, gender,

ethnicity, disability, nationality, and sexual orientation. However, society's historical discrimination and separation on the basis of race create a special need to address racial diversity. It is also the case that unless the University continues its strong commitment to diversity, changing demographics will ensure a smaller and less relevant University in the near future.

**D.1. Apply strategies of proven effectiveness for recruiting and retaining a diverse community of students, staff, faculty, and administrators**

The University's Social Equity Office has prepared a brochure of "best practices" for recruiting faculty of color that is now used by search committees across the System.

**D.2. Increase investigations of and resolve barriers to access, equity, and a campus climate supportive of diversity**

The original intention of the 1996 "cultural audit" that resulted in the "culture of service" initiative (see related highlight under the "resourcefulness" transformation) was to examine barriers regarding diversity on campus. That process should be repeated again, but in accord with its original intention; and again, it probably should be led by an external consultant.

**D.3. Ensure that academic curricula and institutional programs reflect the University's commitment to diversity and equity**

Diversity issues have been a major focus of the campus, as illustrated by the many activities and programs directed at its accomplishment. As with any ongoing initiative, it is important to examine the effectiveness of those programs and revise and reform them accordingly.

**D.4. Ensure an institutional climate that values civility and promotes tolerance**

Civility Day and the Civility Award are just two examples of efforts to this end. Civility and tolerance need to become an even more integral part of the fabric of the campus.

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***Diversity Measures and Achievements/Initiatives Already Undertaken***

*On average, African American, Latino, and female representation among faculty will increase by 5 percent over the 2000-01 to 2002-03 period (WCU POP, June 2000—see other relevant measures in student success section).*

*The University's goal is to increase the combined proportion of African American and Latino students to 8.75 percent of total new freshmen for fall 2001.*

- *The West Chester University Frederick Douglass Institute provides a variety of academic and other programs and is designated as a coordinating body for collaborative multicultural programming efforts in the State System.*

- *The Frederick Douglass Academic Achievement Academy was established to promote academic achievement and immerse first-year students of color in the academic and social culture of the University and the value it places on excellence.*
- *The Campus Climate Intervention Team (CCIT), in existence since fall 1991, has established protocols for responding to and monitoring acts of intolerance.*
- *A university-wide action group has developed a “diversity as a compelling interest” statement as a planning and decision-making aid.*
- *The West Chester University Values Statement and its emphasis on civility and inclusiveness is now posted in every building on campus and appears as the first page of the undergraduate and graduate catalogs.*
- *An Annual Civility Award was established in 1999 and has been awarded to two recipients.*
- *The Women’s Institute sponsors scholarships for women, a distinguished alumnae program, and a prize for women’s studies research.*

## **Human Capital Transformation**

**West Chester University will increase its investment in the continued development of the skills and knowledge of its faculty, staff, and administrators.**

In the discussion of the student success priority, it was suggested that the priority’s full achievement requires a paradigm shift. A transformation of the same magnitude is required to enhance and more effectively manage university resources, with the most important of these being its human capital. The University must significantly increase this investment by providing all employees with the ongoing development and training they need to keep pace with constantly expanding knowledge and rapidly changing information, technology, and service-excellence demands. In short, the University must truly become a learning organization—one that focuses on learning not just for its students, but also for its faculty and staff.

The following goals provide a framework for the extensive human capital development efforts essential to the future of the University.

### **H.1. Strengthen the teacher-scholar model that encourages faculty to bring their scholarship into their teaching and their students into their scholarship**

A successful faculty progresses on the basis of its scholarship (research, creative endeavors, and other original contributions to one’s discipline). For comprehensive universities, the task is to find the appropriate balance among the multiple demands and expectations placed on its faculty. The teacher-scholar model has been adopted at West Chester University—and many other regional comprehensives—as offering that balance. Strong curricula depend on faculty maintaining their expertise in and enthusiasm for their disciplines and engaging students (see previous “engaged learning” transformation) in appropriate opportunities for in-depth exploration of subject matter.

This transformation should not be interpreted, as it has been upon occasion, as an argument for applied vs. pure research. Instead, it is an argument for increased scholarship, for increased participation for students in that scholarship, and as an argument for broadening the definition of scholarship in line with the mission of the University as a regional comprehensive university.

**H.2. Encourage and broaden discussion about the meaning of the teacher-scholar model at West Chester University, including its reflection in institutional practices and policies**

There is widespread acknowledgment of the importance of the teacher-scholar model to West Chester University's aims. There is also concern about the sufficiency of support that is provided for its pursuit; its meaning across the schools, the college, and their departments; and the degree to which the ideals of the model are reflected in essential policies and practices such as tenure and promotion decisions.

**H.3. The conceptualization of the teacher-scholar model at West Chester University should be followed by a clearer definition of the kinds of faculty development activities needed to support the model and the resources necessary for its implementation**

The sufficiency, intent, organization, and awareness of faculty development support are a matter of some concern among both faculty and academic leaders on campus.

**H.4. Increase support for the use of alternative pedagogies and instructional technology**

This goal is clearly related to the student success goal of enhancing curricula and instructional modes that more actively engage students in the learning process. In the absence of a center for teaching effectiveness or some other widely recognized source of ideas and support for instructional improvement and innovation, the achievement of this goal is admirably—but unrealistically—left to the best intentions and creativity of individual faculty.

**H.5. Institute professional development plans as part of faculty five-year reviews**

The idea of faculty professional development plans being updated every five years is already an implicit component of the contract. Ernest Boyer has advocated strongly for this notion for many years. The present rate of advances in disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge is unprecedented; remaining current requires explicit planning and effort.

**H.6. Construct essential skills inventories for all staff positions on campus**

The skills required to perform the work of the campus, including those of a technical nature, are constantly expanding.

**H.7. Increase support for skill enhancement and professional development for staff and administrators**

This is an obvious corollary to the similar goal for faculty and the goal of increasing the human capital of all university employees.

**H.8. Provide programs engaging staff, administrators, and faculty in collaborative professional development efforts and the sharing of information and perspectives**

In true learning organizations, employees learn from each other. The management and leadership development programs initiated during the 1998-1999 academic year represent an excellent start on this goal.

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***Human Capital Measures and Achievements/Initiatives Already Undertaken***

*The curriculum integration seminar mentioned previously in this document could provide a model for a seminar focused on pedagogical innovation, or alternatively, a center for teaching could be reestablished (West Chester University may currently be the only state system school without such a center or program). Regardless of the specific form of the effort, the University's participation rates in programs directed at exploring instructional issues should increase a minimum of 10 percent annually.*

*Participation in university-sponsored skill-enhancement and professional development activities for staff and administrators—including technology training—will increase 10 percent annually over the next three years.*

- *A West Chester University research team discovers earth's oldest living organism; findings published in the fall 2000 issue of Nature attract national and international attention.*
- *West Chester University's Annual Poetry Conference attracts international attention.*
- *Academic Computing's rotating seminars, workshops, and mini-courses for technical skill development for both administrative and instructional applications are enhancing the campus's technological competence; increased support and managers' continued reinforcement of the importance of continued skill development should increase their impact.*
- *The leadership and management skills seminars initiated over the past year and a half are viewed as very successful by participants; major expansions of the seminars, focusing on distributed leadership and accomplishing the **Plan for Excellence**, are being developed.*
- *Faculty development funding enhancing teaching, learning, and scholarship has been steadily and significantly increasing in recent years at West Chester University.*

## **Resourcefulness Transformation**

**West Chester will diversify the base of its physical and fiscal resources and increase the effectiveness with which they are managed.**

Knowledgeable employees must be empowered to make the decisions, acquire the resources, and provide the services that will maximize their productivity. Asking members of an organization to increase their adaptiveness and “agility” in the face of the competitive environment that confronts the University obligates the University to become so itself. Put simply, the University cannot afford organizational structures and practices that impede agility and the effective management of resources if it wishes to continue its recent successes.

The manner in which higher education in general, and the University specifically, conducts its administrative functions has not kept pace with the changes in business practices and processes occurring in almost every other segment of society. A major component of the resourcefulness transformation is a call for examinations of university business practices. Those examinations must be unimpeded by assumptions that the special nature of the educational process requires its every aspect be protected from the global realities other institutions, both public and private, are having to adjust to in order to remain competitive.

In addition, to achieve its vision of excellence, the University must become more resourceful in obtaining additional fiscal and physical capital.

Examples of some of the goals and strategies essential to achieving this highly complex and critical priority are offered below. As was the case for each of the previous priorities, they are provided principally in the interest of providing a framework for the more specific goals and strategies that must be worked out by the affected units themselves.

### **Rf.1. Extend distributed leadership practices across all levels of the University**

Distributed leadership, whereby decision-making responsibility, accountability, and authority—including the control of such resources as complement and budget—are placed within individual subdivisions and units, has been a major success for the University and an important incentive for attracting and retaining competent, senior-level managers. Both its understanding and its application need to penetrate to fundamental levels of the organization.

### **Rf.2. Implement systematic process-improvement initiatives**

This goal reflects the recommendations of the PricewaterhouseCoopers®, MGT America, and state system *Convergence* reports. It should include more widespread application of benchmarking efforts in administrative areas paralleling the academic year model in academic affairs. It should also include systematic mechanisms for providing service areas with customer feedback.

**Rf.3. Eliminate excessive bureaucracy and strengthen cross-divisional collaboration**

This too reflects recommendations from PricewaterhouseCoopers® and the *Convergence* reports, particularly in relation to what they identify as “functional silos” and unnecessary ossification of functions.

**Rf.4. Diversify and add to the University’s financial resource base**

Dependence on the state appropriation (which has been declining steadily in proportion to the University’s total budget) or tuition (which has been increasing steadily) will prevent the University from reaching its vision of excellence.

The following efforts are essential to achieving additional resources from external sources.

- Promote an institutional image that emphasizes excellence and tailors external communications to reflect the interests and needs of the University’s many external constituencies

Much of the success of this effort will depend upon the clarity and strength of the University’s image. The University’s mission and its importance must be clear to its own members, as well as to the external community. The success of external fundraising will depend, ultimately, on the extent to which all employees, students, and alumni and the University’s innumerable friends in the region and elsewhere are effective advocates for the University.

- Increase funding for capital projects and endowment

Capital projects and endowment will be a major emphasis of university fundraising efforts. An emphasis on capital projects is critical because of the significantly higher level of funding matches required from the University for all new facilities projects. Building the endowment can provide stability in the face of fluctuations in commonwealth funding and enrollments.

- Increase giving and other forms of support from corporations, foundations, and governmental agencies

While each of these forms of support must increase, the discrepancy in the University’s attainment of external sponsored-research support relative to that obtained by its national peers is particularly pronounced. By the same token, support for the pursuit of external grants has been limited, sporadic in application, and lacking any clear plan.

- Increase innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit at the individual and programmatic level throughout the University

As just one example, an increasing number of functions at the University have become self-supporting centers, a trend that should continue.

**Rf.5. Base resource allocations on the University’s mission and priorities and create a campus culture in which individual and departmental priorities support university missions and goals**

The University must reexamine its “additive” model of improvement that, upon occasion, mistakes new for improved and more efficient services and programs. It is equally critical for every member of the university community to recognize the role they play in supporting institutional missions and goals. The importance of this goal cannot be overemphasized. In an environment of limited resources, not all programs and not all activities can be considered equally critical. If they are, the inevitable result will be mediocrity.

**Rf.6. Implement the Capital Facilities and Technology plans**

In a most fortuitous circumstance of timing, simultaneous with the development of the *Plan for Excellence*, the University has also developed both a Comprehensive Campus Facilities Plan and a Technology Plan. The thorough analysis of infrastructure provided by the facilities plan is enabling the University to act on its technology plan sooner and with greater confidence. The relationship between the *Plan for Excellence* and the facilities plan has been reciprocal, with immediate, tangible, and highly significant benefits. It is impossible to consider independently from facilities such strategic-planning parameters as future enrollments, student and program mix, curriculum delivery systems, and future competitiveness. Further, the University’s success in obtaining a significant share of the facilities funding available for the most recent capital facilities Request for Proposals (RFP) can be traced to the level of detail and the innovative program mixes and affinities that the University’s proposal was able to address. The parameters related to these two factors and their critical importance to future program directions had already been defined in the combined planning processes, so the extremely tight deadline for proposals did not pose a problem for the University.

Combined, these plans outline a bright future for the University. They prepare the University to be competitive in areas that are going to be increasingly important in attracting and retaining quality students and strong faculty and staff. Today’s students expect an attractive, safe, technologically enriched learning environment. Those same characteristics increase the satisfaction and productivity of all members of the university community.

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***Resourcefulness Measures and Achievements/Initiatives Already Undertaken***

*The proportion of the University’s budget accounted for by personnel costs will be reduced an additional 2 percent between 2000-01 to 2002-03 (WCU POP, June 2000).*

*Credit-hour production per FTE faculty member will increase 1 percent annually during the 2000-01 to 2002-03 period (WCU POP, June 2000).*

*Proposal submissions for external grant and foundation support will increase 5 percent annually over the next three years.*

*University giving will increase 10 percent annually in the 2000-01 to 2002-03 period (WCU POP, June 2000).*

- *Distributed leadership principles have reversed several years of 2 percent reductions in operating budgets. The past three years have witnessed significant budget rollovers and a 2 percent reduction in the proportion of the total budget accounted for by personnel costs.*
- *The “Culture of Service” training initiative has involved 340 university staff, administrators, and faculty and has suggested many potential process, policy, and procedure improvements.*
- *Cooperation between academic and student affairs around service learning represents an exemplary model for cross-divisional collaborations.*
- *The academic year model of faculty productivity has increased credit-hour production across all major academic units for three consecutive years.*
- *Leadership development seminars for faculty and senior and middle managers have improved participants’ managerial skills, their awareness of the external pressures confronting public higher education, and their effectiveness as university leaders.*
- *The summer room and board program has attracted national attention, increased summer school enrollments by 35 percent, provided opportunities for students to decrease their time-to-degree rates, and increased university revenue*

## **Implementation Overview**

Three “givens” will strongly influence the implementation of the *Plan for Excellence*. Two of these bode well for its success. It is difficult to predict the effects of the third inevitability. The first of the givens is the distributed leadership model that is central to the manner in which West Chester University is administered. The second given, and one that flows directly from the distributed leadership model, is that budgets are decentralized. That is, the University’s budget is largely in the hands of the vice presidents, who, in turn, determine individual distributions within their divisions. Further, savings accomplished by an office or department stay in its budget (i.e., rollover) at the end of the year, rather than reverting to the central budget. Put simply, the central budget is relatively small and assigned almost totally to fixed, essential costs.

The third given is that state system mandates and goals will increasingly determine both the nature and latitude of university goals. These three givens, but most particularly the last one, create an extremely complex planning environment.

The complexities raised by the University’s distributed leadership model are more apparent than real. On the surface, this leadership model might suggest that particularly widespread and

strong buy-in for the goals of the plan will be required. In reality, strong buy-in is the essential ingredient to effective implementation of any strategic plan, regardless of the particular management model in effect. As already noted, the development of the *Plan for Excellence* was marked by an extremely participatory process (focus groups, surveys, extensive environmental scans, and interactive road shows) and written (Web site, TownHall) dissemination of plan drafts.

Over the past five years, the distributed leadership model has brought about significant change on the campus, as evidenced by the many accomplishments highlighted in the sidebars throughout this document. Those changes would not have been possible absent the underlying principle of distributed leadership that change is motivated best by managing incentives and policy—not individual decisions and budgets. Put simply, keeping managers fully informed about important goals, and trusting their judgment of how best to achieve those goals, has been a major source of the University’s success over the past five years. The plan provides a number of fairly specific goals, and as the example template following this section of the report illustrates, SPAC has a good notion of the major “players” who will need to be involved in their accomplishment. But in accordance with the major principle of distributed leadership, the specific tactical decisions critical to the accomplishment of the goals of this plan are best left to the players most responsible for achieving them. In order to succeed, however, these players must be consistently informed about the operative internal and external factors that must be considered and how those factors relate to their own and the University’s interests. So, now that the *Plan for Excellence* has been published, it is the committee’s intention to continue to go to any and all groups on campus—indeed, to invite itself if not invited—to continue dialogue about the plan and the role of the various constituencies on campus in its implementation.

Regarding decentralized budgets, this issue frequently raises questions on the part of those not familiar with the basic principles of distributed leadership about how critical linkages between budgeting and planning are accomplished. As already noted, an important principle of distributed leadership is that managers are most effective when left to their own devices in accomplishing their functions; however, an important part of those functions is that of advancing not just the interests of their individual units but also those of the University. Managers are held accountable to both sets of interests, and with the exception of special-initiative funding, the principal budget and planning linkage occurs at the level at which it most directly affects decisions and at which accountability issues are clearest—at the division and individual unit level.

Accordingly, distributed leadership at West Chester University has resulted in realignments, reallocations, and reassignments within divisions, and, in some instances, shared funding of certain initiatives across divisions. It is clear, however, that the magnitude of change required by the five transformations posed by the plan is going to require considerably greater cross-division realignments and reallocations.

Regarding constantly changing, but inevitably increasing, state system mandates and plans, the major issue is how best to integrate them with institutional needs and goals. That task has occupied more and more of the time and effort of managers across the entire institution. This fact

is illustrated quite clearly by the past eighteen months that were supposed to be devoted largely to the University's development of its *Plan for Excellence* as the focus and integral component of the reaccreditation self-study for the Middle States Commission. While the University did, in fact, maintain its intended focus, it also had to accommodate three major state system planning mandates, all issued in that same time frame with minimal warning and exceedingly short deadlines. These accommodations could only be accomplished with major deployments of its planning resources for relatively extended periods of times at relatively critical moments in the development of the *Plan for Excellence*...

Specifically, in mid-December of 1999, the State System Board of Governors (BOG) mandated that all the universities in the System totally redo their capital facilities requests—most of which represented up to five years of cumulative planning—for submission to the Board less than two months from the time the mandate was received. The designated deadlines required most of the work to be completed over the semester break, a time traditionally reserved for internally focused “catching up” and planning efforts. That the change of direction apparently came as a bit of a surprise to the central office resulted in a scramble on its part that resulted in guidelines that were “works in progress.”

Less than a month after the submission of the integrated capital facilities plans, the System mandated a totally new approach to the long-standing tradition of annual reports. The new requirement mandated comprehensive Performance and Outcomes Plans (POP)—due in early June, as opposed to the traditional August deadline. Over the course of the two months responses were being crafted to the sweeping changes the POP guidelines demanded in terms of accountability, there was a continuing stream of changes and additions to the guidelines. Having anticipated many of those “vicissitudes,” West Chester University completed its POP quite early in the interest of returning to its own strategic planning effort. Unfortunately just as the final draft of the University's POP was being finalized, revised POP guidelines—as well as a new set of BOG performance goals—were issued. Some of the BOG goals were related to existing PIs, while others appeared to be rather isolated reflections of a new system strategic plan. That plan was developed with a definition of “system university participation” that was based on minimal formative input and a 30-day limit for input into the final draft. Although the plan was subsequently tabled, the goals added on to the POP from that plan continue to prevail as the goals upon which system universities' performance will be judged over the coming year.

As a point of fact, the University fared well through all of these planning vicissitudes. For example, it received almost one-third of the capital facilities funding available, and its POP was identified as a model for the System. Regardless, the important reality with which these vicissitudes in system planning mandates confront the University is that a major planning task for the University from this point forward will be that of maintaining a constant state of vigilance to identify, and then capitalizing upon, as many interrelationships between its interests and goals and those of the State System as possible. As illustrated by the template referenced and explained below, that effort has been initiated in the case of *Plan for Excellence*.

Given the circumstances discussed above, SPAC has determined that the major set of players to be charged with implementing the plan will be the University's five vice presidents assisted by

the Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA). It is OPA and the five vice presidents—along, of course, with the president—who are and should be most attuned to changes both in the immediate (the State System) and the broader environment to which the University must increasingly attend in order to continue its success. And it is the five vice presidents (and certainly the president) who are and should be most able to apply budgetary support, the authority of their offices, and the continued modeling of distributed leadership needed to effect the transformations called for by this plan. Consequently, the vice presidents and the director of OPA, along with an academic dean (with this appointment rotating annually among the five academic deans) and two individuals appointed from the current SPAC membership, will compose a Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC). The council's charge is three-fold:

1. Monitor the progress of the plan.
2. Establish and charge special task forces as needed to accomplish specific aspects of the plan.
3. Advise the Administrative Budget Committee regarding the fiscal implications of various SPARC recommendations, including those being forwarded to the president in regard to the Presidential Initiatives Fund.

As previously noted, with the exception of the Presidential Initiatives Fund, very little discretionary funding is centrally held. The Presidential Initiatives Fund is currently funded at \$250,000 annually and has been used in the past to “jump start” various strategic initiatives. The fund would likely continue to serve that purpose in the case of the *Plan for Excellence*, based principally on SPARC recommendations.



