

**Chancellor's Strategic Planning Task Force  
Final Report of the External Relations Sub-Committee  
May 2007**

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### **Subcommittee Charge and Summary of Work**

The External Relations subcommittee met eleven times throughout the academic year to consider the various stakeholders present to the UMB community (students, prospective students, legislators, trustees, President's office, employees, neighbors, K-12 school partners, community college partners, business partners, alumni, and others) and develop a plan to position and promote UMass Boston in all avenues, including increasing the visibility of collaborations with key external stakeholders that integrate learning and research and advance the university's urban mission. In developing the plan, the committee was asked to focus on:

- Ties with the business community;
- Ties with the "neighborhood";
- Branding of UMB and communication of mission;
- Communications (internal and external and use of vehicles, including the website and other electronic vehicles);
- Government Relations;
- "Master Plan" communications: future campus changes and impact on community
- Communication with employees;
- Marketing and communication for the university (how to take advantage of value proposition);
- Aligning the perception of the university with the reality—the quality of our programs and services are better than people perceive it to be;
- Providing a comprehensive and coordinated effort to advance the University in various forms of media;
- Maximizing the connection between our faculty student staff and facilities with the needs and demands of the metropolitan region.

In the early months of the process, we spent considerable time assessing what it is we do as a university in the external world. We reviewed a report on the impact of community engagement prepared by Institutional Research for the Urban Mission Coordinating Council (UMCC) as well as efforts by the UMCC to map the university's external efforts. Our efforts, we concluded, were widespread, but they lacked cohesion and coordination internally. In addition, in part, because our efforts are so widespread, we are not effective in our ability to sell these efforts externally. This is also partly because we are often so focused on doing the work that we don't promote it and, as a result, no one knows about the good work we are doing.

We looked at universities around the country and in the Boston area. Some were well known for their external relations efforts – the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee are just two examples, and others were known – particularly many of our neighboring institutions in Boston – for their long-standing structural hierarchies to deal with the external world.

### **Vision for External Relations and Rationale for Recommendations**

In developing its vision for external relations at UMass Boston, the committee considered two important facets of external relations. The first is communication and promotion: how effectively the university communicates with and markets itself to external constituents. Effective and consistent internal communication is key to effective external communication. The second is partnerships: how effectively the university develops and promotes partnerships with external

groups and institutions that advance the university's urban mission. The resulting vision statement captures this dual role.

In 2010, external relations at UMass Boston are coordinated with multifaceted partnerships that advance the overall goals and strategic priorities of the university. These external relations will be organized, accountable, transparent, cohesive, and effective. The impact of UMass Boston's external partnerships are well known, well respected, and contribute to the knowledge of effective strategies for addressing the economic and social needs of metropolitan regions. The high quality of the university's programs and services is widely recognized by internal and external constituents.

In reviewing the university's communication and promotional efforts, the committee concluded that our efforts to advance the University in various forms of media need to be more comprehensive and coordinated. There is a significant gap between the perception of the university and its quality and the reality—the quality of our programs and services are better than people perceive it to be.

Part of the challenge at UMass Boston is that our external relationships and activities are extremely diffuse, there is a lack of focus to the work and no branding. We have focused more on getting everyone “under the tent” than on having several highly visibly, focused initiatives. We try to be all things to all people and end up being nothing. We haven't been willing to make hard decisions about things like quality—is initiative X a high quality initiative? Or to say this project is better than this one for these reasons. Lack of internal coordination undermines both impact and recognition of the many overlapping and potentially synergistic community-based endeavors currently in place at UMass Boston. Furthermore, the focus has been on doing the work, with very little attention to promotion and marketing.

A third challenge is multiple definitions of community and differing understandings of the university's urban mission. The consensus of the committee is that community is not just the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the university. Nor is it just Boston. Increasingly, it is becoming and should become metropolitan areas globally. This is not to say that the surrounding neighborhoods and our relationships with them are not important. In many important and key ways these relationships are the foundation for all of the work we do externally. UMass Boston faculty and staff are helping to solve critical urban problems and we need to become more known for our significant expertise.

To address these challenges, the committee is making recommendations in three broad areas: creation of a formal structure to manage external relations and partnerships, a more focused effort to brand the university by identifying and marketing signature projects, and a more holistic, coordinated marketing and communications operation.

#### Structure for External Relations and Partnerships

In looking at issues of structure, it is clear that the creation of Government and Community Relations unit, led by a senior administrator reporting to the chancellor, is needed to coordinate and manage external relations. This unit would include governmental affairs, marketing and

communication, economic development, and community partnerships. Our current structure – essentially an ad-hoc collection of earnest efforts headed by the Deputy Chancellor which occasionally ties into the other efforts around the University – was at best a reactive mechanism that did not adequately incorporate solidly developed working relationships throughout the City of Boston or the Commonwealth. The formation on an office or unit with institution-wide scope will significantly improve this condition.

The committee is recommending that the university’s existing offices of communication and marketing, community relations, and economic development be part of this formal unit. In addition, we are recommending that an office of Governmental Relations, sufficiently staffed at the local, state and federal levels with appropriate support staff, be created. This office would work closely with governmental relations efforts of the President’s Office.

The committee is also recommending the creation of an Office of Community Partnerships. Key external partnership efforts will be coordinated through this office. The office will serve as a clearinghouse for information about all external partnerships—the “front door” to existing and potential external partnerships. The leader of the office will have a dotted reporting line to the provost to facilitate broad involvement of faculty. An advisory board, perhaps a smaller, reconfigured Urban Mission Coordinating committee, will provide guidance and support to work of the office. Additionally, this office will benefit the faculty, staff and students at the university who are engaged in community-based learning, teaching and scholarship in numerous ways: disseminate information about funding and professional development opportunities; coordinate internal actors with one another to leverage resources and impact; assist in recognition of efforts; maintain literature and publication resources on best practices; and more.

#### Branding UMass Boston

The committee recommends designating and then aggressively marketing “signature initiatives” that are examples of UMass Boston’s expertise and of civic and community engagement. The committee further recommends aligning these signature initiatives with the strategic research clusters and to focus on initiatives that are of interest to key stakeholders.

The committee recommends using the research clusters identified in the Battelle Study commissioned by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee to organize external partnership work—Urban Health and Public Policy; Developmental Sciences; Science Education and Learning Research; Transnational, Cultural, and Community Studies; Computational Sciences, Analysis Methodologies, and Modeling; Integrated Environmental Monitoring, Systems Modeling, and Decision Support; Biological Systems and Technology; Sustainable Systems and Venturing. Projects and initiatives which meet the signature criteria will be highlighted as examples of the university’s expertise in one or more of these areas. In addition, all initiatives and projects will be catalogued under the research cluster rubrics as much as possible further communicating a coordinated, coherent approach to the work. The committee also recommends using the work of the Carnegie Group, being conducted by the president’s office, to further identify initiatives to feature. This work will tell us what messages resonate with key audiences.

### Holistic, Coordinated Marketing and Communication

Coordinated communication is essential in order to build long-term brand equity, increase awareness, enhance credibility, celebrate diversity, generate a powerful value perception and ensure continued growth for the UMass Boston. The university system educates students, empowers workforce, promotes research, builds communities, and helps drive the social and economic future of all regions of the state. By working together collaboratively and deliberately, at the both the campus and system levels, we can begin to shape the UMass Boston brand in a way that will strategically support our mission and our endeavors at the level we desire.

The next step in President Wilson and the Board of Trustees' initiative to integrate marketing across the university system is to take the findings from their marketing research study and integrate them with other relevant strategic planning information on each campus to develop individual campus positioning statements. While UMass Boston is working on developing our positioning statement we will also complete an assessment of our current marketing functions and activities. Once this assessment is complete, we will have a clear evaluation of the effectiveness and the efficiency of our current marketing efforts.

Why evaluate the marketing effort? Because marketing is an important tool that UMass Boston can use to increase enrollment, improve its association with higher quality, and strengthen its overall credibility with all audiences. While marketing is powerful, it is most *effective* when messages are clear, coherent, and cohesive and it is most *efficient* when it is coordinated within and between departments.

We are seeking to put in place a structure that will best support our efforts to integrate marketing and communications activities that contribute to the creation of positive perceptions as well as our collective goal of a stronger reputation for UMass Boston. Integrated marketing is a total institutional enterprise that requires continual communication and transparency of efforts.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

1. **Create a Government and Community Relations unit.** Led by a senior administrator reporting to the Chancellor, the unit will coordinate and manage external relations and partnership work. Comprised of governmental affairs, marketing and communication, economic development, and community partnerships, the unit will ensure that the high quality of UMass Boston's programs and services is widely recognized and valued by internal and external constituents.
  - a. **Create an Office of Community Partnerships.** Key external partnership efforts will be coordinated through this office. It will serve as a clearinghouse for information about all external partnerships—the “front door” to existing and potential external partnerships. Will have dual reporting lines—also to the provost to facilitate broad involvement of faculty. An advisory board, perhaps a reconfigured Urban Mission Coordinating committee, should be in place to provide guidance and support to work of the office.



- c. Develop a consistent set of vehicles in terms of look, marketing, and branding and ensure that all on campus utilize these vehicles. Work with consultants to conduct a communication audit that will compile all of the things people use to communicate with internal and external audiences inventory things like: look, cost, purpose, and the like.

**Attachments:**

Web Site Redesign Steps

Institutional External Relations grid

Report on Pilot Study to Assess the Impact of Community Engagement