A REPORT TO FACULTY, ADMINISTRATORS, TRUSTEES, AND STUDENTS OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NEWARK, DE 19716 | www.udel.edu

PREPARED FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTION'S
2016 PERIODIC REVIEW REPORT

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ONE | INTRODUCTION

Chartered in 1833 but tracing its origins to 1743, the University of Delaware (UD) is a state-assisted private university with the Carnegie classification as a doctoral university with the highest research activity.

A university-wide steering committee produced UD's 2016 Periodic Review Report (PRR). The PRR is clearly written and thoroughly sourced documentation of the progress of the University since the 2011 decennial site visit. In the intervening years, UD has completed their "Path to Prominence" (P2P) strategic plan and embarked on a new strategic plan entitled "Delaware Will Shine."

The 2011 team visit report affirmed that UD was in compliance with all fourteen MSCHE standards.[1] The team visit report also included seven recommendations for UD to address. UD's 2016 PRR responds to the seven recommendations and other suggestions. UD has also provided a frank assessment of more recent challenges posed by sweeping change of institutional leadership.

TWO | RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS DECENNIAL EVALUATION

In Section Two of PRR, UD addresses all seven recommendations and at least one suggestion from the 2011 team visit report. The periodic review report follows the order found in the Section VI of the team visit report, which they further clarify with their own numbering. Below, we reprint each recommendation with UD's numbering. Indented beneath the recommendation, we have summarized the response found in UD's 2016 PRR.

Recommendation I.a. | We recommend that the University, especially through the Office of the Provost, ensure that the new budget system's metrics are leavened with judgments about educational quality.

> UD begins their budget responses with a preamble that explains their subsequent reconsideration of the Responsibility Based Budget (RBB) model they adopted in 2009. As further detailed in Appendices 1-3, the transition began with an RBB Task Force appointed in 2013. The April 2014 interim report seems to address Recommendation I.a with the statement, "Guiding the RBB Task Force's work is the principle that resource and cost allocations should be driven by core academic

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[1] We note that there are inconsistencies in the PRR about the dates of preceding documents. For the sake of clarification, we note that UD's self-study is dated 2010 and the site visit report is dated 2011. While Section Two is entitled "Response to the 2011 Evaluation Team Report," each quoted recommendation has a bracketed citation reading, "Middle States Review, 2010."

priorities including the pursuit of academic excellence and research prominence throughout the University" (65). Following a combination of internal deliberations and the recommendations of an external review, UD is poised to adopt an All Funds Model to which they will transition by FY 2018.

> The all-funds budget model is designed to distribute revenues to the colleges and collect a tax to support central University operations in a fair and transparent way. It does not dictate how funds are spent at the college or university level. College and central University leadership are expected to exercise judgment about how funds are used and ensure the quality of the programs that are offered (9).

Recommendation I.b | We recommend that the UD leadership institutionalize broad-based understanding that a portion of revenues is necessary to fund general University operations. This should include funds controlled by the Provost's Office for University-wide initiatives, such as key interdisciplinary institutes.

> UD notes that each college is taxed to cover general University operations. While the Research Office funds the interdisciplinary institutes, a portion of the tax is made available for the Provost's Office to support University-wide initiatives.

Recommendation I.c | We also recommend that UD invest as necessary to build a first-rate development and alumni relations infrastructure. It should work to raise the sights of its alumni when it comes to giving back to the University.

> UD reports increased staffing and budgeting for the Office of Development and Alumni Relations over the last several years. They have increased the number of gift officers from 5 to 30, and created a principal gifts office. In the eight-year period between 2007 and 2015, cash gifts have more than doubled from $21.5M to $48.6M and fundraising (new gifts and commitments) has nearly tripled from $19.3M to $54.3M.

Recommendation II.a | We recommend that the institution should commit itself forcefully and visibly to improving the diversity of its whole community—students, faculty, and staff.

> UD's commitment to improving diversity and inclusive excellence predates the 2011 team visit. Following a 2009 Campus Climate Survey, the central administration empaneled a committee to study the findings and make recommendations. An immediate result of the 2011 team visit report was the creation of the President's Diversity Initiative to recruit a more diverse community of students, faculty, and visiting scholars. The 2016 PRR groups UD's efforts since 2011 in five domains:

> **1. Vice Provost for Diversity.** The Vice Provost is a senior advisor to the Provost regarding all matters of diversity including issues related to hiring, promotion and tenure, community outreach, and campus climate. The Vice Provost has oversight of a number of highly visible efforts including the Office of Equity and Inclusion, the

Center for the Study of Diversity and a number of hierarchical groups interlacing staff reporting lines and the faculty governance structure.

2. Admissions Office. The Admissions Office has assumed a proactive posture with regard to diversifying student cohorts. The College Readiness Scholars Institute, a collaboration with the state and a local school district has sought to model college preparation by allowing select juniors and seniors to attend classes and make use of academic resources. They have also made use of student ambassadors to meet with prospective students and families.

3. College Initiatives, **4. Office of Graduate and Professional Education**, and **5. Student Life**. Beyond the central administration, the individual schools have fostered their own initiatives.

Overall, UD has continued and expanded efforts to improve diversity and inclusive excellence. It is especially encouraging that the first strategic initiative of Delaware Will Shine calls for a Welcoming and Collaborative Campus Community, noting:

> Diversity, defined to include all aspects of human difference, is both a social responsibility and an intellectual commitment. It is required to achieve excellence through learning, teaching, scholarship, student development, institutional functioning and engagement in local and global communities (102).

Recommendation II.b. | We recommend that the University study the reasons for the significantly lower graduation rate for students from underrepresented minorities, especially African American students, and develop concrete steps for improvement.

> UD notes a retention rate gap of 2% to 4% for African American students and cites the National Survey of Student Engagement and anecdotal comments by students to link that gap to poor onboarding: insufficient preparation and social factors. The remedy for these issues is rightly bundled with the overall expansion of diversity efforts detailed above for Recommendation II.a.

> We also note there is a widening of the gap to a 6% to 9% difference by the fourth year. Following a study of the 2007 freshman cohort, UD will pilot EAB's Student Success Collaborative in the fall semester.

Recommendation II.c | We recommend that a coherent plan be developed to further enhance gender diversity among the science and engineering faculty and to make what appears to be even more important progress in racial diversity among the entire faculty.

> UD can document enhanced gender diversity since 2011 largely thanks to a succession of hard-won grants from the National Science Foundation. The most recent NSF grant includes resources to conduct hidden bias training and to hold a

conference. While not expressly stated in the PRR, some elements of planning faculty diversity are covered in the response to Recommendation II.a.

Recommendation III.a | It will be important in recruiting faculty, especially junior faculty, that the language in tenure and promotion documents be consistent with the expectations that are set for them […] we recommend that this be carefully tracked and completed as soon as possible.

> Since 2013 especially, UD has made significant progress in clarifying promotion and tenure documents in all seven colleges. An ongoing process to further revise these documents was underway at the time the PRR was written.

Recommendation III.b | Although not a recommendation, the Middle States Review team report identified "concerns about non-tenure track teaching faculty and the criteria for promotion."

> It is not surprising that this suggestion was added to the list of recommendations in the PRR: UD can demonstrate enviable success in defining the criteria for promotion for non-tenured faculty in a way that has earned unanimous support from internal stakeholders.

THREE | MAJOR CHALLENGES AND/OR OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities

The immediate opportunities and objectives for UD are presented in their new strategic plan, Delaware Will Shine. The new plan is arranged in five major themes: 1. A Welcoming and Collaborative Campus Community; 2. Innovative Education Design; 3. Multidisciplinary Research and Scholarship; 4. Campus Safety and Wellness; and 5. Community Engagement. The overarching goals of the Strategic Plan stem from Standard 1: Mission and Goals and eventually branch into all 14 Standards.

UD's expansion of research activity over the last four years has also created opportunities aligned with Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal. In addition to increased budget activity, UD can demonstrate increased capacity for research through a judicious enlargement of facilities. UD's Science, Technology and Advanced Research Campus (STAR Campus) is transforming a former Chrysler assembly plant into the facility to explore the intersections of research, education, and entrepreneurship. The 196,000 sq. ft. Patrick T. Harker Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Lab (Harker ISE Lab) is a facility that is said to drive curriculum changes in some physical sciences instructional laboratories. Most recently, a 12,000 sq. ft. addition to the Life Sciences Research Facility included Delaware's first functional MRI (fMRI) apparatus.

Challenges

UD has undergone a significant transition in key leadership positions linked to Standard 5: Administration. With the departure of President Patrick T. Harker in June 2015, the PRR was overseen by Provost Domenico Grasso reporting to Dean Nancy Targett, then serving as acting president. While president-elect Dennis Assanis will assume office in November 2016, UD is now contending with interim appointments in key leadership positions: executive vice president and treasurer, vice president for communications and public affairs, vice president for information technologies, vice president for facilities, real estate and auxiliary services, dean of the College of Earth, Ocean and Environment, dean of the College of Education and Human Development, vice-provost and director of libraries, and director of athletics and recreation services.

UD is prudently planning to manage concerns about Student Admissions and Retention (Standard 8) and Student Support Services (Standard 9). While UD is exceeding its enrollment targets, they recognize the need to increase the enrollment and success of students from historically underrepresented groups, first generation students and students from low-income families. By expanding the pipeline of students in these categories, facilitating their admission, and working to ensure their success, UD is very much exceeding the recommendation set for them in the 2011 and preparing for a transition to the strategic initiatives in Delaware Will Shine.

One final concern UD addresses in Section Three is the ongoing redesign of the general education curriculum, which has "evoked spirited debate among the faculty" (28). While this looms as a concern for Standard 12: General Education, it will likely need to be addressed as UD considers the second initiative for Delaware Will Shine: innovative educational design.

FOUR | ENROLLMENT AND FINANCE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

UD is stable with respect to both finances and enrollment.

The fall 2015 total student enrollment was 22,852 of whom 90% were FTE. The total enrollment has grown over 12% since fall 2006. Undergraduate enrollments are projected to rise as a result of domestic recruiting. Graduate enrollments are expected to remain constant.

As noted in the Financial Associate's Report, the University has significant financial flexibility. It has a relatively large endowment, especially compared to its long-term debt. The University currently has bond ratings from Moody's and S&P's of Aa1 and AA and there are no areas of concern from the review of audited financial statements. UD projects marginal growth in its financial position through fiscal year 2019 and these assumptions seem reasonable.

FIVE | ASSESSMENT PROCESSES AND PLANS

UD's assessment processes are robust and fully integrated into the regular business of the University.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Operating out of Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, a Business Intelligence team can pool real-time information on enrolled students, faculty and staff, tuition revenue, financial aid, and course enrollments. Historical data is also available in a format that will facilitate projections. Moreover, the data can be culled with sufficient granularity to allow reporting to external stakeholders such as accreditors or government agencies. The University's Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Framework presents logical path for data collection throughout the fiscal year that allows UD to evaluate its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals both for the purposes of budget oversight and for the evaluation of the strategic plan.

UD's "Sustaining and Accelerating the Advance" Working Group was tasked with evaluating the Path to Prominence (P2P) strategic plan. The work of this group, sourced by data from Institutional Research presents evidence of sustained institutional assessment and improvement. Appendix 20 presents a benchmark report presumably dated 2013, indicating progress in such criteria as degrees granted, retention and graduation rates, and research expenditures as they pertain to the six milestones in the P2P plan.[2]

Based on this robust information, and as noted in the PRR, it is possible "to understand which aspects of the Path to Prominence strategic plan have been accomplished, which aspects should be abandoned and which should be prioritized in the next strategic plan." As a result of this process, which should be ongoing, including a full analysis of outcomes, strategic planning is a more dynamic and focused effort.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning.

UD truly distinguishes itself with its thorough commitment to assessing student learning. As a matter of routine, UD's Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning works directly with faculty to help define and measure student learning objectives at the assignment, course, and program level.   At a larger level, UD has embraced a number of cross-cutting assessment instruments to track the larger efficacy of their local measurements. In short: UD is assessing their assessments. The ETS Educational Proficiency Profile, the Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus, and the Critical Thinking Assessment Test comprise three

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[2] While not noted in the text proper, Appendix 19 links to a P2P website which refers to a 2012 benchmark that is not included. http://www1.udel.edu/prominence/

instruments of differing origin that have been used to measure Standard 12: General Education effectiveness since the 2011 PRR.

Among the many strategies that have been used for sustained assessment and improvement in General Education one finds the application of the AACU oral communication rubric. Bu applying the rubric to video files of student presentations, UD can show a significant rise of scores over a six-year period which is said to be the result of "increased opportunities for professional development in instruction for oral communication" (Table 11, 53).

SIX | LINKED INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES

UD's strategic planning and budgeting process is an iterative cycle that falls between two meetings of the board of trustees: one in the fall and one in the spring. The fall meeting reports on prior-year performance and projects current challenges, while opening a year-long discussion of planning priorities for the following year. The spring meetings close a year of deliberations and officially set the agenda for the fiscal year that follows.

Each of the seven colleges represents is its own revenue/cost center, which allows for flexibility and nimble action in pursuit of narrow objectives. However, recognizing the infrastructure needs vary between program, the Provost can redistribute funds between colleges with the One University Support program. Capital budgeting, endowment payout, and other universal expense and revenue is administered centrally by the University.

SEVEN | CONCLUSION

The University of Delaware is has made demonstrable progress over the last five years. Overall, the objective to establish a UD as a national marque in research and scholarship is made clear even by the names of their strategic plans: "Path to Prominence" and "Delaware Will Shine." UD is on sound financial footing and has been appropriately introspective about the realignment of their budgeting processes. In recent years they have made sound investments in to increase their capacity for research

UD is still managing a significant transition in key leadership positions. Moreover, recent investments in leadership for enrollment management and student support services suggest an appropriately watchful posture with regard to admissions and retention. But the successes benchmarked from the P2P strategic plan the initiatives set forth by Delaware Will Shine indicate an appropriately-paced agenda for assessment and improvement in advance of the 2020 decennial self-study.