

2014 University Retreat Summary Report

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Introduction

In fall 2012, UMBC launched its strategic planning process, *Our UMBC: A Strategic Plan for Advancing Excellence*. During the 2012-13 academic year, the UMBC community engaged in campus conversations and helped develop ten [guiding principles](#). These principles established a call for a strategic planning process that is:

- Rooted in UMBC’s vision and values
- Broadly inclusive by engaging stakeholders, including shared governance groups
- Communicated effectively to the campus
- Rich in analysis of campus performance as well as internal and external opportunities and challenges
- Open to dialogue about systemic strengths and weaknesses
- Clear about the decision-making process
- Specific in setting priorities and flexible to accommodate emergent opportunities
- Connected with State and University System of Maryland priorities
- Open to new and divergent perspectives
- Aligned with financial planning and fundraising

At the [2013 University Retreat](#), members of the UMBC community reviewed the planning process design and progress; shared collected advice on values, vision, and focus areas; and introduced the steering committee and its charge. Planning focus areas were discussed at the retreat and through a series of more than 35 campus conversations during fall 2013. Considering campus input, the steering committee established four major focus areas: the Student Experience; Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy; Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement; and Community and Extended Connection. Members of the UMBC community were then appointed to lead strategy groups to address each area between March 2014 and April 2015. Strategy groups are charged to serve as agents of responsibility and are expected to align their work with current and future interests of the campus community, the State of Maryland, and the nation. Adhering to this charge, the strategy groups generated research questions and stakeholder maps to guide their work and conversations at the 2014 retreat on August 19-20 and beyond.

Retreat Opening

The 2014 retreat marked a midpoint in the University’s strategic planning process. The retreat provided opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and alumni to have substantive interactions with strategy groups, the foundations work group, and other groups responsible for engaging the campus throughout the strategic planning process. There were 218¹ retreat participants: 100 (40%) faculty, 110 (44%) staff, 10 (4%) undergraduate students, 10 (4%) graduate students, and

¹ Some participants identified themselves as having more than one connection or role.

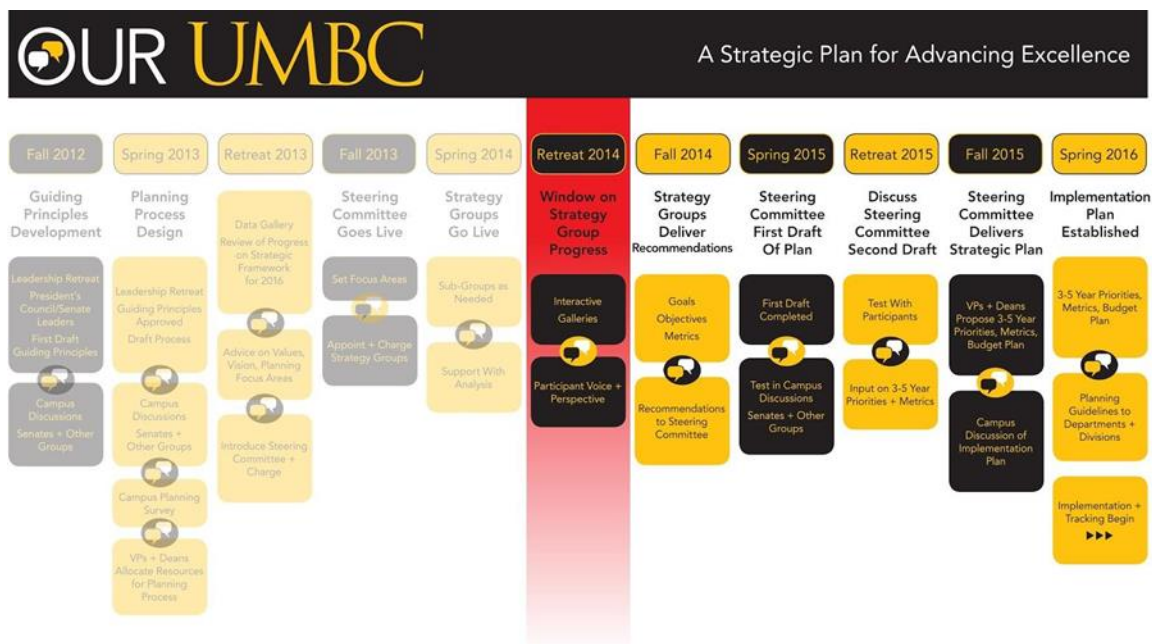
21 (8%) alumni. Ninety-eight percent of participants indicated they had some prior connection to the strategic planning process, and the majority of participants were able to identify strategy groups correctly. Participant data, conversation, and input from this year's retreat were captured and analyzed using Covision software.



In his opening remarks, Provost Philip Rous drew attendees' attention to the [strategic plan timeline](#), noting that planning activities are on schedule to produce a draft plan for discussion at the 2015 University Retreat. Provost Rous recognized the importance of the [steering committee's](#) work, calling its members "agents of responsibility" charged with engaging the campus planning questions and discussions. He thanked everyone involved in the strategic planning process, especially the members of the steering committee, the co-chairs of the [strategy groups](#), the co-chair of the [Middle States Self-Study Process](#), the co-chair of the [foundations work group](#), and alumni who have dedicated much time and thought to the process.

Strategic Planning steering committee co-chair Bruce Walz provided an update on [steering committee progress](#) and the ways in which the guiding principles shaped last year's planning work. He noted that planning leaders have collaborated with the campus in a variety of ways to discuss vision, values, and focus areas. Discussions occurred in 45 meetings involving more than 1,200 representatives from governance groups, administrative leadership teams, and the campus community. More than 180 faculty, staff, students, and alumni volunteered to support the strategy groups as members and advisors. In addition, regular updates on the planning process were sent through campus-wide emails and UMBC Insights and, to date, the planning.umbc.edu resource website has been viewed more than 8,000 times.

Walz reported on the Foundations Work Group and its assessment of people, resources, facilities, technology and business systems, and environmental sustainability critical to the University’s future growth. Inclusive discussions about research questions posed by strategy groups and analyses by the Foundations Work Group were the main focus of the 2014 retreat. In the coming year, discussions will continue and recommendations will be presented to the campus through focus groups, consultation with governance groups, and broader campus meetings. The work will culminate in the 2015 retreat, where the steering committee will deliver a final strategic plan, which will provide long-range strategies and goals to guide decision making at moments of opportunity or challenge. These strategies will align not only with the campus mission and vision, but also with USM, state, and national priorities, as well as global opportunities. Vice presidents and deans will have the responsibility to tie the strategies to three- to five-year priorities, budget, and metrics. The priorities emerging from the strategy groups’ work will inform the case for support in the comprehensive fundraising campaign to launch in 2016.



A Note About Communication: Inclusive stakeholder engagement and two-way communication throughout the planning process are responsibilities of planning leadership groups including the Council of Deans and Vice Presidents, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and Focus Area Strategy Groups.

August 2014

Brit Kirwan addressed the retreat audience for the last time as USM chancellor before he retires from 50 years in higher education. He compared UMBC once again to the famous racehorse Seabiscuit to illustrate that the University has emerged as a true champion from its modest beginnings almost 50 years ago. He spoke about the great successes of UMBC as evidenced by numerous awards and recognitions, which would not have been possible without outstanding and dedicated faculty, staff and students. Chancellor Kirwan also applauded the importance of a well-rounded education in all disciplines at UMBC. He concluded by discussing his observations

about the future. While the nation depends on higher education more than ever, there is a need to plan for a period of fiscal stasis due to fiscal challenges and political dysfunction. This plan needs to insure that more low-income and underrepresented minority citizens receive higher education degrees. Furthermore, there should be an ever-greater focus on the needs of the larger society, such as workforce development, translational research, environmental challenges, and the overall quality of life in America. To achieve these goals in a challenging fiscal and political climate, institutions must be ready and willing to be inventive and innovative in their approaches to teaching, learning, research, and scholarship. UMBC is already showing impressive national leadership in these areas. Chancellor Kirwan is convinced that, like Seabiscuit, UMBC will continue to be successful time and time again and serve as a national model in addressing these challenges.



President Freeman Hrabowski highlighted the importance of continual innovation, observation, and assessment. He reminded everyone that success is never final in an outstanding organization. President Hrabowski stated that we have applied innovation and assessment to so many projects in so many areas of the campus that we are on the verge of institutionalizing a culture of excellence greater than any one of us. The current planning process is a tool to support the campus in this endeavor. In addition to research questions posed by each strategy group, President Hrabowski encouraged participants to consider four questions during their discussions:

- 1) What are the best examples of innovations that have worked?
- 2) How do we engage all students in the breadth our campus has to offer?
- 3) How do we ensure that all students have opportunities to affiliate with supportive communities?

- 4) How will we continue to work to build a brand of academic excellence, innovation, and caring about people on campus and beyond?

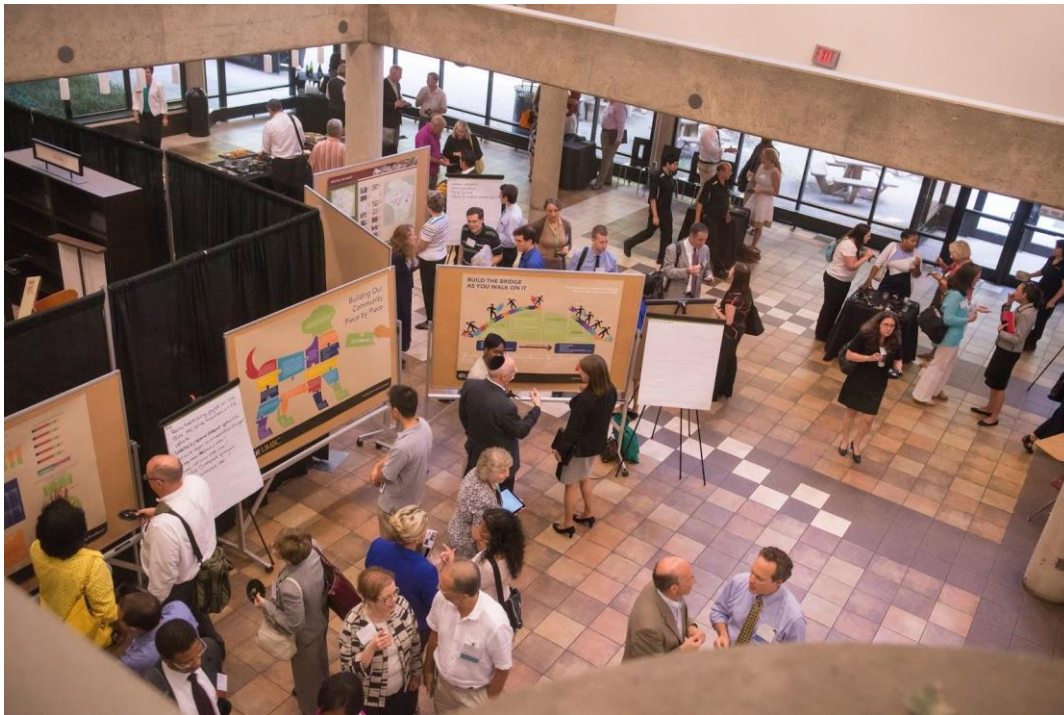
President Hrabowski addressed several important trends in higher education and their implications for UMBC, such as increasing diversity in terms of race, heritage, and income; global reach; and U.S. competitiveness. As a result of these trends as well as UMBC's particular challenges (e.g., large enrollments in high-cost STEM and arts majors, having no medical school, and facing legal challenges over academic program approval), we need to advocate aggressively for more funding per student, maximize our partnership with the professional schools at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), and continue to take an innovative approach to academic program offerings. The creativity, collaboration, and persistence of UMBC faculty, staff, students, and alumni have led us to become one of America's most innovative campuses and a model for others. He expressed with certainty that the strategic planning at the retreat will shape not just the future of UMBC but higher education broadly.

Provost Rous explained that the work of the strategy groups is at an early point, which provides the opportunity to incorporate diverse perspectives into the research questions of each group. To contribute to the direction of this work, the provost encouraged retreat attendees to visit and comment on the [Interactive Galleries](#) showcasing the [Vision Statement Development](#); the [Foundations Work Group](#); and the strategy groups of the [Student Experience](#); [Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy](#); [Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship and Creative Achievement](#); and [Community and Extended Connection](#). Retreat attendees then had the opportunity to choose two out of four strategy group breakout sessions to engage in substantive discussions.

Interactive Galleries

Interactive galleries focused on the strategy groups, the Foundations Work Group, and UMBC's vision. They provided an opportunity for retreat participants to engage in the strategic learning process. Strategy group galleries featured [posters](#) with breakout questions, committee member names, stakeholder maps, goals, and research questions. The Foundations Work Group gallery showcased [information](#) about shared services centers and business process improvements at UMBC, and building our community piece by piece. This group highlighted five key foundational areas: people, resources, facilities, technology/business practices, and environmental sustainability. The gallery focusing on UMBC's vision and value development displayed [posters](#) highlighting the process of community engagement in discussing values and developing vision drafts. This process included a campus-wide survey in spring 2013, core values identified at the 2013 University Retreat, and campus conversations throughout the 2013-14 academic year that included 45 meetings attended by 1,200 participants. Two drafts for UMBC's new vision were a result of these efforts and were presented at the 2014 retreat. Retreat participants at each interactive gallery had the opportunity to add questions and leave comments

on a flipchart. Participant feedback was entered into the Covision software and provided to strategy group co-chairs and work group members.



- Participants visiting the Student Experience gallery mentioned access to surrounding communities and off-campus activities as important. They also identified the need to gather data concerning students' experiences on campus, including peer interactions, academic support and support services, and variations in students' experiences by college, major, and demographic characteristics.
- Participants at the Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy gallery would like this strategy group to explore offering diversity training for faculty, creating new first-year courses to help students explore majors, linking in- and out-of-class experiences for students, and the role of peer undergraduates in innovation. Participants also commented on stakeholders and identified Student Affairs, teaching assistants, new media and technical support, corporate partners, and community colleges as important.
- At the Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement gallery, participants posed questions concerning reward structures for faculty beyond teaching, making connections for faculty across disciplines, collecting data on faculty research and publications, improving administrative support for grants, involving staff in educational research, increasing post-doctoral positions and funding, defining the role of graduate research in light of undergraduate research successes, and creating more GA and RA positions to support projects. Participants at this gallery also commented on important stakeholders and listed IT and facilities, staff, alumni, and the Office of Institutional

Advancement. They suggested a study of best practices in student success as well as building collaborations between creative centers and the sciences.

- Participants at the Community and Extended Connection gallery mentioned the importance of local community college partners. They also suggested creating a UMBC community volunteer day, as well as sharing existing partnerships, outlining ways to partner, and establishing infrastructure for implementing partnerships. Participants also listed important stakeholders to consider, including the Career Center, mentors, parents, Veteran Affairs, employers, religious groups, community organizations, and individual partners.
- At the Foundations Work Group gallery, participants added the following for consideration: establishing a faculty development committee, offering competitive faculty salaries, establishing seed money for one-time research costs, establishing webinars for professional development, ensuring diversity in staff recruitment, creating more career advancement opportunities for non-exempt staff, planning ahead for needed infrastructure, providing daycare on campus, and including external graduate fellowships in UMBC reports.

Vision and Values Recommendation

Retreat participants reviewed [two versions of final drafts](#) of UMBC's new vision statement and provided feedback on how well each draft reflects campus values and aspirations.



***Draft A:** Our UMBC community will redefine the impact a public research university can achieve through leading-edge teaching, discovery, and civic engagement. By valuing diverse perspectives, we will attract inquisitive minds that thrive on solving problems through*

collaboration. We will prepare students and empower scholars to succeed in life and transform the world.

On a 10-point scale ranging from ‘not very well’ to ‘very well,’ 165 participants scored Draft A as 7.4 in reflecting campus values and 7.3 in reflecting campus aspirations.

The qualitative feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Many described Draft A as accessible, brief, concise, and succinct. They liked the inclusion of civic engagement and the emphasis on success in life. Participants also thought that it is large enough for UMBC to grow into. Others found it to be too passive, vague, strong, wordy, restrictive, congruent, and similar to who we already are. They expressed worries that it: 1) focuses on output not process; 2) is not sufficiently impactful and inspiring; 3) does not focus sufficiently on lifelong learning and citizenship; and 4) is not measurable. Some participants also felt that important aspects are missing, including a mention of staff, faculty, research, excellence, multidisciplinary, creativity, community, critical questioning and an explanation of what will happen once UMBC attracts inquisitive minds. On the other hand, a few participants expressed that there should be no distinction between students and scholars. Instead, faculty, staff, and students should all be captured in the word ‘scholar.’ They also suggested that students are succeeding in life and transforming the world while at UMBC. Furthermore, there were diverging opinions regarding the integration of leading-edge teaching, discovery, and civic engagement versus reconsidering the order of the elements to list research first.

Draft B: *Our UMBC community will sustain a diverse and dynamic culture that is a model for excellence in higher education. We will build on a foundation of innovative teaching, discovery across disciplines, and vibrant civic engagement to provide a distinctive experience for students, scholars, and staff. By attracting and nurturing inquisitive minds, we will advance knowledge, ask and explore bold questions, and engage in creative and entrepreneurial endeavors as we transform lives, careers, and the world.*

The 160 participants who responded scored Draft B as 8.2 in reflecting campus values and 8.1 in reflecting campus aspirations.

The majority of participants provided positive feedback for Draft B as well. Several people expressed that they prefer this draft as it is more direct, stronger, comprehensive, substantive, bold, measurable, inclusive, and specific to our identity. Participants noted that it includes UMBC core values and fundamental principles. Several participants particularly noted the last sentence as very strong, while one person pointed out that the order of attracting minds, advancing knowledge, and asking questions is backward. Others thought that the statement is too long, vague, cumbersome, passive, cheesy, safe, and boring. Participants also worried that it is not inclusive, cannot be measured, dilutes the message, is not aspirational and inspirational enough, does not sufficiently address academic success, and focuses too much on the present

instead of the future. They noted that it is missing sufficient attention on faculty, staff, support and non-exempt staff, research, educating students, public service, public research university, and innovation beyond teaching. Several participants disliked the words *sustain* and *provide*. The former may paint UMBC as a static place and could be replaced with *continue to expand*. The latter describes people as consumers and could be switched with *create* or *co-create*.

Strategic Planning and Middle States Self-Study Process

UMBC Middle States committee co-chair Robert Carpenter provided an [update](#) on the self-study process and its connection to the strategic planning process. Higher education faces significant challenges, including declining state and federal support and increasing student debt. Because universities play an important role in social change and economic progress, we need to find ways to maintain access and affordability. Accreditation serves to ensure students get a high quality education and to promote improvement through reflection and peer review. The self-study is an essential part of the accreditation process. Carpenter explained that aligning the study with the strategic planning process will make both exercises more meaningful and useful. This also leverages our efforts and exploits complementarities. The Middle States team is excited about this alignment, which reflects their confidence in UMBC.

Breakout Sessions

Each strategy group hosted a morning and afternoon breakout session. In each session, participants spent 90 minutes discussing custom questions framed by strategy groups and 30 minutes on defining what excellence would look like in this area. Retreat participants had the opportunity to attend two breakout sessions. Strategy group members facilitated roundtable conversations. Throughout the discussions, participants entered reflections and suggestions into the Covision software. The collected data were shared with the strategy group co-chairs, who will review all comments and utilize the information to inform their ongoing work. Participants also created [posters](#) illustrating what excellence means in each focus area. These were displayed in a Visioning Excellence Walk following the afternoon breakout sessions. As participants toured the gallery, strategy group members engaged them in discussions about concurrent session results and asked for their feedback.



The Student Experience

The Student Experience strategy group focuses on creating 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. Retreat participants' shared their perspectives, experiences, and suggestions during table group discussions. Overall, 87 retreat participants were part of the student experience breakout sessions: 5 undergraduate students, 4 graduate students, 53 staff, 19 faculty, 5 deans/VP/AVP, and 1 alumnus.

In the morning breakout session, participants discussed course offerings; transfer student and international student concerns; student advising; standard of care and service delivery to students; and compositional diversity and multi-culturalism. In the afternoon session, participants talked about a sense of community among students; experiences necessary to enhance lifespan and career preparation, as well as success after graduation; mentoring relationships; and distinctive characteristics of UMBC students.

Participants identified a number of challenges regarding course offerings. While summer and winter sessions have alleviated some of the issues, there are still too few sections of certain courses, and many courses are offered off-cycle. Combined undergraduate and graduate courses are often less challenging for graduate students. A solution may be to offer a separate discussion section. Course offerings should be determined in a data-driven process. Participants also suggested hiring more faculty and staff and creating more spaces for teaching. In addition, many

students “hoard” courses, often occupying a seat that another student could have used, but there is currently no penalty. Course offerings may affect time to degree, which is especially an issue for transfer and non-traditional students and those who want to study abroad. The transfer student population faces additional issues: international and out-of-state course credits do not transfer in a timely manner; core pieces of the major often do not transfer; all general education courses are often already fulfilled. Veterans are especially affected. Participants suggested having a registrar advisor and to adapt pathways for transfer students as well.

Participants valued the importance of advising, but recognized a number of challenges. Some students are self-advising; many incoming students do not see a major advisor; there is no follow-up; and advising notes are often not utilized or shared with students. Furthermore, advisor quality varies. To remedy this issue, participants discussed training advisors; creating best practices and protocols when students switch majors; hiring more professional advisors and providing them with career advancement opportunities; and assessing advisors, including faculty advisors whose performance could be included in promotion and tenure. On the other hand, some advisors feel pressured to keep students moving along and may have a large number of advisees compared to other departments. Advising throughout the summer and the semesters should be encouraged to prevent a large increase close to the beginning of the semester. In addition, it may be useful to publish the schedule of classes earlier and provide improved online presence of advising information that students could utilize to prepare for their advising session. In terms of graduate student advising, there is much peer-to-peer advising and a lack of transparency in the advising process. There is also no online degree audit for graduate students. Some graduate program directors advise all departmental graduate students, which limits the time they can spend on other tasks and can lead to poor advising.

When discussing standard of care on campus, participants widely felt that there is no standard. The RT system has improved service; however, students are still often sent from person to person. To improve this issue, participants suggested creating statements of expectations for faculty, staff, and students; implementing (interdepartmental) customer service training for all student workers, faculty, and staff; monitoring instances when the standard of care has not been upheld; creating a centralized evaluation process; and appointing an ombudsperson or advocate. Furthermore, essential offices, such as the Registrar, Bursar, and Financial Aid, should remain open longer during orientation and registration; appointment booking should be moved online to show demand; a resource website should be created; a customer service team should answer phones instead of student workers; and food options need to be available in the evening.



Participants described the UMBC community as a place where people are very smart, well-prepared, hard working, poised, and distinctive. There exists a culture of academic rigor, co-creation, pride in diversity, undergraduate research, and connections to industry. A sense of community is especially fostered through affiliated programs, such as the Honors College. To support community building, participants suggested creating more shared spaces for social gatherings and studying, designed outside spaces, and eateries. In addition, faculty should create community in their courses and become more accessible to students. Participants identified athletes, graduate students, international students, transfer students, Shady Grove students, and commuter students as populations that need to be better integrated into the campus community. Participants discussed diversity at UMBC as transformative and important in preparing students for the global world. It supports them in gaining problem-solving and communication skills. To promote diversity, participants named First-Year Seminars, Council of Majors, the Student Government Association, the Student Events Board, student organizations, the Mosaic Center, the Women’s Center, and International Education Services as ideal spaces for dialogue. Other ideas included incorporating discussion about diversity in the STEM curriculum; holding cross-cultural retreats; composing diverse groups for student projects; centralizing all events; and hiring faculty and staff to reflect the student population.

In terms of lifespan and career preparation, participants discussed the importance of experiential learning opportunities, reflective experiences, and research. They stated that students need mentorship and that there should be training for mentors and mentees. They also thought that students need to be taught time management, prioritizing, public speaking, teamwork, financial

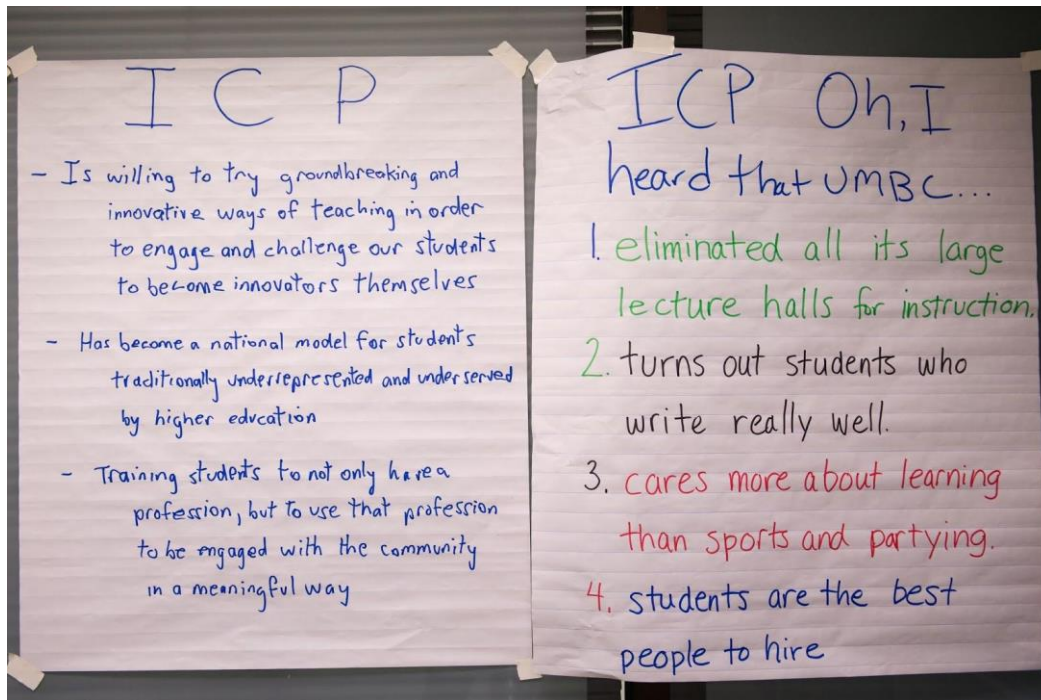
literacy, wellness, dinner etiquette, interview skills, and skills necessary to lead a diverse workforce. Some participants also felt that pathways should exist in majors beyond the STEM fields.

Participants in both sessions completed a “visioning excellence” exercise where they discussed key moments/activities/experiences that shape students’ lives and prepare them for the future. They envision UMBC as a community based on shared values, diversity, and traditions that continues to grow and develop through collaboration, relationships, mentorship, leadership, connectedness on and off campus, and responsibility for oneself and others. Participants’ visions also determined experiential learning, research, intellectual challenge, and athletics as essential characteristics of UMBC. At each table, participants displayed their collective understanding of these key points in posters. Participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts at the end of each session.

Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy

The Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy strategy group identified principles for evaluating innovative teaching approaches, student success in undergraduate and graduate programs, and teaching and learning facilities as focus areas. Two additional focus areas were how to define innovation in pedagogy and curriculum, and what kinds of innovation in curriculum and pedagogy have taken place at UMBC. In their breakout sessions, participants considered these areas in groups seated at each table, and then collectively in a discussion led by the strategy group co-chairs. Overall, there were 57 participants: 3 undergraduate students, 1 graduate student, 19 staff, 27 faculty, and 7 deans/VP/AVP.

Participants mentioned that evaluation should recognize that innovation is not an end in itself, but is a means to achieving broader goals. Evaluations of innovative teaching should be guided by student learning outcomes and student engagement both in and outside of the classroom, and should ascertain how well different approaches consider the needs of different types of learners, such as transfer students, introverts, and mid-level learners. In addition, evaluations should consider the extent to which innovation in the classroom fosters higher orders of thinking among students. Evaluations also should recognize differences across classrooms in terms of size and pedagogical goals. Finally, there should be a process in place to prepare faculty and students to adapt to new classroom techniques.



When discussing principles for evaluating student success in undergraduate and graduate programs, participants mentioned that evaluation should encompass a long-term perspective from entry in programs to milestones along degree path—including in and out of majors—to post-graduation paths such as graduate school and careers. To accomplish this, standards should be established that align with departments and colleges, as well as national and international standards, and interventions should be used when students are not meeting benchmarks. Participants also noted that evaluation should be transparent, fair, meaningful, and scientifically valid, and that students should have an opportunity to be involved. A third theme that emerged was measurement. Participants suggested developing surveys metrics to ascertain student perceptions of interactions with faculty and staff, and with involvement in civic engagement, student organizations, extracurricular activities, and assistantships for graduate students; outcomes for different student groups such as traditional students, adult learners, part-time students, transfer students, and online students, as well as different demographic groups; and student experiences post-graduation, including professional development skills, by establishing mechanisms for information sharing. These data can subsequently be used to compare UMBC to peer institutions. Participants identified the role of content as a final theme and noted that content application is key. This relates to intellectual change and growth, particularly when students have the ability to translate knowledge across courses and disciplines. To support student success, participants discussed principles for evaluating teaching and learning facilities. They noted that the classroom space should allow faculty to use multiple modalities and flexible pedagogical methods that are consistent with innovative teaching and able to adapt to changing technology over time, and that innovative teaching or pedagogical theories or practices should be matched with appropriate space. Participants gave additional examples of natural or comfortable

lighting, handicap accessibility, appropriate technology, whiteboards/chalkboards, students' personal space, and available power outlets for students.

In defining innovation in pedagogy and curriculum, participants stated that it involves continuous improvement, based on a foundation of assessing gains in student learning. It improves understanding of what should be taught, how it should be taught, by whom, to whom, and for what purposes. Participants mentioned that it also introduces something new that unsettles previous practices and challenges the passivity of conventional learning. This involves creating an environment where students are producing something rather than consuming, as well as exploring learning models less constrained by the traditional 15-week semester, such as lab-based learning models. Participants listed specific examples of innovations that have already taken place on campus, particularly in the STEM fields, such as team-based learning in Biology courses, Chem Discovery, CASTLE, the Calculus Active Learning Clinic, and Supplemental Instruction. Elements of these innovations of particular importance were having separate lecture and lab components for theory and practice; students having opportunities to design their own research projects/experiments; and professional practice being part of capstone courses. Participants noted the use of technology as an important innovation. Examples included delivery methods that span the spectrum, from conventional lectures, to hybrid or online courses, to flipped classrooms where content is delivered outside of class and the class periods are used to work problems and/or discuss content in greater depth, as well as specific technologies such as online collaboration tools, discussion forums, document cameras, and tablets, all of which foster teamwork and enhanced student/faculty interactions.

Participants in both sessions completed a “visioning excellence” exercise where they discussed key dimensions of innovative academic programs for the future. They envision providing the highest quality education, training, preparation for graduate school, and job placement for students from all backgrounds by valuing every student and engaging them through active and experiential learning, and real-world problem solving. At each table, participants displayed their collective understanding of these key points in posters. Participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts at the end of each session.

Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement

The Collective Impact in Research, Scholarship, and Creative Achievement strategy group identified current strengths; multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional areas for growth; areas that, with targeted investment, will elevate UMBC's national prominence in the next five years; utilizing and extending local and regional connections; priorities and metrics to track progress; and needed resources as focus areas. In their breakout sessions, participants considered these areas individually, in groups seated at each table, and then collectively in a brief discussion led by the strategy group co-chairs. Overall, there were 77 participants: 2 undergraduate students, 3 graduate students, 23 staff, 41 faculty, and 8 deans/VP/AVP.



Participants identified many strengths in research, scholarship, and creative achievement. Collaboration was a major theme, which UMBC’s size fosters. This collaboration, especially across disciplines, is fueled by passionate faculty who integrate students into their work, and by an investment in people in terms of recruiting high-quality new faculty. UMBC’s location also facilitates collaboration with the external community, including the private sector beyond and within the Research Park, other institutions (especially UMB), and federal agencies. Participants noted that a continued investment in STEM fields and recent investment in the arts and humanities, particularly the new PAHB building, has created high-quality programs positioned to address society’s current challenges. Technology was seen as a major area for targeted investment to elevate UMBC’s prominence in the next five years. Participants cited cybersecurity and the digital humanities as examples. Public relations was another key area for investment, which would improve faculty exposure and which could be accomplished through leveraging continued collaborations with the external community. Participants also listed increasing interdisciplinarity; a focus on global issues such as food, water, and energy; improved junior to senior faculty ties to train new faculty to compete for funding; and more support for graduate students to recruit the top candidates as areas where investment would have the greatest impact.

To better utilize and extend connections with local communities and regional assets, participants discussed engaging the local community to come to campus; increasing student internship opportunities; communicating which external relationships exist; developing agreements and protocols with local laboratories; and strengthening existing initiatives and centers like the Shriver Center, Breaking Ground, and Baltimore Heritage. To promote, sustain, and grow multi-

disciplinary and inter-institutional initiatives, participants mentioned increasing communication on interdisciplinary activities so that the campus community is aware of opportunities; encouraging and training students to take part in interdisciplinary research; increasing team teaching and problem-focused multi-disciplinary research; increasing funding toward collaborative seed projects within UMBC and among USM and other agencies; broadening external reviewers for seed proposals to include business and government leaders; and building more infrastructure such as interdisciplinary research labs. Concerning what priorities and metrics should be used to track progress and success, participants discussed tracking student success and graduates' professional positions, the number and quality of graduate student applicants, graduate programs in which UMBC undergraduates are accepted, placing UMBC post-docs in competitive positions, the number of interdisciplinary projects, discipline-sensitive metrics, real-world impact of UMBC's research, external funding both past and present, faculty visibility and increased research activity, incentives for risk-taking, impact by number of faculty citations, and increased internal research assessment. In discussing what resources are needed to attain our goals, participants desired faculty to be less burdened, more per-student funding, more endowed chairs, preparation to meet state and federal granting agencies' expectations, expansion of DRIF programs, shared services centers, increased focus on OSP staff to help write proposals and provide pre- and post-award support, more training and centralized systems for equipment management, funding to support faculty between grants, and an improvement of metadata and software environments to foster collaboration.

Participants in both sessions completed a "visioning excellence" exercise where they discussed key dimensions of future research, scholarship, and creative achievement. They envision UMBC as the top choice for students compared to Johns Hopkins and College Park. Participants' visions also determined that UMBC fosters collaboration among students from all backgrounds, faculty, disciplines, and the greater community, both locally and globally. At each table, participants displayed their collective understanding of these key points in posters. Participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts at the end of each session.

Community and Extended Connection

The Community and Extended Connection strategy group identified the following focus categories: infrastructure, economic impact, recognition and rewards, social justice/environmental sustainability, communications and marketing, best practices, campus enrichment, and new directions and opportunities. In their breakout sessions, participants considered these categories by discussing exemplary and effective partnerships, ways in which existing and new partnerships may grow, and institutional avenues to address challenges. Participants answered questions as a group per table. The strategy group's co-chairs displayed entries on a screen and asked others to share thoughts after each round of questions. As a final activity, table groups created posters to illustrate headlines about community partnerships at UMBC they would like to see published in 2020. Table representatives shared their posters in the

larger group. Overall there were 103 participants: 3 undergraduate students, 5 graduate students, 58 staff, 18 faculty, 11 deans/VP/AVP, 6 alumni, and 2 community members.



Participants listed a wide range of existing partnerships. Among them were: 1) service-learning partnerships with organizations, (e.g., BARCS—Baltimore Animal Rescue & Care Shelter); 2) K-12 partnerships with various schools in Baltimore County and Baltimore City (e.g., Lakeland Elementary and Middle School); 3) course-related partnerships (e.g., Mapping Baybrook); 4) research partnerships (e.g., UMB); 5) industry partnerships (e.g., NASA); and 6) art-based partnerships (e.g., the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Heritage and Culture). These partnerships provide experiential learning, employment, research, and funding opportunities. Participants cited the Shriver Center and Career Services as instrumental in creating and maintaining many external partnerships. While most of the discussion focused on external partnerships, a few also mentioned internal ones, including the SUCCESS program.

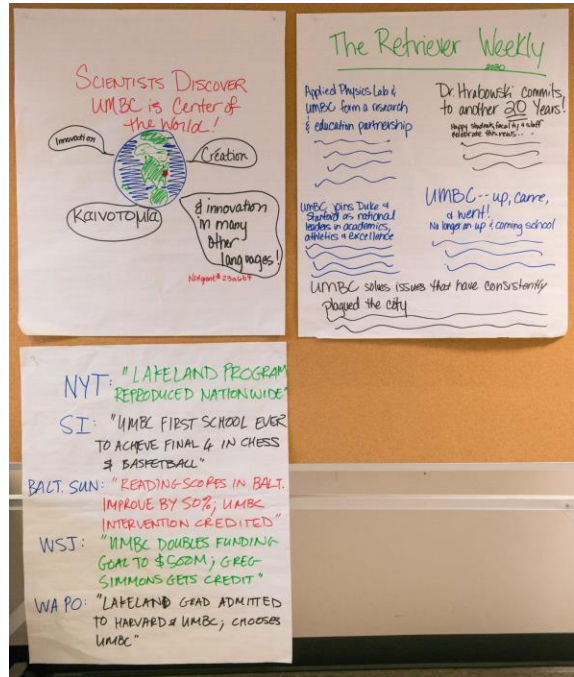
Participants said that for partnerships to be effective, they must be valued by the University and connect to its mission and vision. As a public institution, UMBC should develop partnerships that are problem-centered to address the needs of society. Participants also suggested thinking beyond the traditional understanding of partnership through innovation and creativity. They identified authentic collaboration, reciprocity, synergy, and trust as essential characteristics. To foster commitment on both sides, interests, values, purposes, and goals must be mutual. Branding and marketing should also occur in collaboration. Other important characteristics identified include interdisciplinary approaches; complementary assets and skills; effective communication

of expectations, roles, and responsibilities; clear communication; appreciation of diverse opinions; reasonable timelines and routine interactions; proximity; accountability; and transparency. Furthermore, partnerships need to have the appropriate infrastructure and resources for multi-year, sustainable commitments. That is, collaboration should occur on multiple levels and not rest in one person; passionate champions with influence need to continuously support partnerships; goals must be tangible; there needs to be flexibility while still staying true to the intent of the partnership; and partners must have genuine interest in mentoring and collaborating with students. Participants also stated that monitoring and assessing partnerships is essential.

Another area of discussion addressed challenges to creating and sustaining effective partnerships. Participants identified a lack or insufficient allocation of human, material, and financial resources (capital); logistical constraints; differences in guidelines; a lack of communication about existing connections and available benefits; and different research and publishing expectations and priorities across departments. To mitigate these issues, participants suggested creating appropriate infrastructures supported by a central clearinghouse. This central space could be beneficial by strengthening partnerships within the campus; tracking, showcasing, and developing existing partnerships; providing formalized training; improving impact on career development; supporting grant writing; working with faculty to incorporate partnerships in coursework in practical ways; and developing partnership opportunities for alumni and graduate students. Participants also stated that promotion and tenure review should consider faculty engagement and their contributions to nurturing and maintaining partnerships. Other recommendations mirror characteristics that participants also identified in their discussions of effective partnerships: think of partnerships beyond service (i.e., partners should not simply “shop for students”); ensure mutual benefit and commitment; identify shared values, goals, expectations, and outcomes; foster inclusivity and transparency; prioritize sustainability; promote interdisciplinary projects; recognize and reward partnering; define effectiveness; develop standards and requirements to align partnerships with career paths; and assessment.

Participants in both sessions completed a “visioning excellence” exercise where they discussed the impact of the new strategic plan in the year 2020. They envisioned that partnerships will have become a UMBC priority. There will be a focus on strengthening existing partnerships; creating partnerships in new areas, including greater opportunities to interact with UMB staff, funders, and state agencies; and overcoming geographic separation through the use of technology. Participants also envisioned increased human, financial, and physical resources; adjustable workload for staff to incentivize partnerships; and inclusion of faculty and staff in continuity plans if projects are student driven. In 2020, there exists improved communication regarding available partnerships and grants; effective partnership training; defined stakeholder roles; standardized approaches to partnerships with levels of flexibility; outlined exit strategies; bureaucratic practices that serve as facilitators not roadblocks; and systematic evaluations and impact assessments. As a result of our work, partnerships will be recognized internally and externally, and UMBC will enjoy increased visibility in local communities.

Additionally, participants were charged to share headlines they would like to see published in 2020. They mostly centered around community partnerships, the status of the University, fundraising, research, and athletics: “Congress Approves Funding for American Universities to Replicate UMBC Community Outreach Model,” “UMBC Recognized for its Work in Baltimore City and Surrounding Communities Making it a Vibrant Place to Live and Work,” “Dr. Hrabowski Commits to Another 20 Years as UMBC's Leader,” “UMBC No Longer Up and Coming - UMBC Has Arrived,” “Elon Musk donates to UMBC saying, ‘They are the Tesla of Universities,’” “Former Meyerhoff Students Win Nobel Prize!,” “UMBC leads efforts on early access to research opportunities,” “UMBC triples federal research funding,” and “First school ever to get to final four in chess and basketball.”



Closing Remarks



Retreat participants met in the new PAHB Concert Hall for closing remarks. Bruce Walz thanked everyone and acknowledged an overall acceptance of the strategic planning process. He also noted the diversity of students, faculty, and staff in breakout sessions and the importance of this for rich input. He also recognized the hard work ahead and implored everyone to be part of it. The strategy group co-chairs then shared initial themes from retreat discussions. Provost Rous added that the common goal of advancing excellence at UMBC will benefit all members of our community and society as a whole. President Hrabowski concluded that each person involved in strategic planning has come to this process with an open mind and an open heart. This authenticity and trust makes UMBC a special community. He ended by saying, “It doesn't get any better than this.”

Conclusion

Following the retreat, strategy groups will consider all collected participant perspectives and recommendations to inform their planning process. Their work will further be supported by their continuous engagement with the campus and external stakeholders throughout the year. Based on these perspectives, recommendations, and ongoing conversations, the strategy groups will

deliver recommendations to the steering committee, which will draft a plan that will be shared at the 2015 Retreat. The [strategic planning timeline](#) provides more details regarding next steps through 2016.