

Report: Student Life and Student Engagement Discussion Group

DISCUSSION GROUP SUBMISSION TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Please submit electronically to your Steering Committee liaison by April 10.

Discussion group: Student Life/Student Engagement

Chair: Marty Wilder

Charge to your group: Student Life and Student Engagement: Recommend goals, objectives, and some possible benchmarks that will enable the University to become a more effective student-centered institution and ensure that all students have a positive, memorable, and distinctive UMW experience. This includes improving our NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) data, addressing the student perception that UMW has an unresponsive bureaucracy, improving our services to students, developing a coherence and synergy between the academic and cocurricular programs, and sustaining a responsive, engaging University environment.

Provide a brief rationale as to the importance and value of your area in helping define and advance UMW over the next five to eight years:

The research literature in higher education clearly indicates that the quality and quantity of student engagement with the university—academically, socially, and culturally—are keys to student development, satisfaction, and retention. In order for the University of Mary Washington to fulfill its mission as a premier institution of higher learning, it must ensure that all students have opportunities for an excellent quality of life and high levels of engagement. As a student-centered university, UMW must focus its energies and resources on continuous improvement of the student experience. To support data-driven decision making, the University must develop and utilize a comprehensive program to assess the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of its students. Over the next five to eight years, UMW should build and strengthen programs and services that ensure a distinctive student experience and that lead to higher levels of satisfaction and persistence. How well the University succeeds in this arena will become increasingly more important in making the UMW experience relevant and sought-after by prospective students.

List a set of broad-based goals in your area that support the larger vision/goals of the strategic plan [See attached or go to the planning website <http://strategicplanning.umwblogs.org/steering-committee/vision-values-defining-ideas/>]:

- A. **Ensure for each student a distinctive UMW experience that is integrated and consistent throughout the student's UMW career.**
- B. **Establish a campus culture that is student-centered, collaborative, and responsive to students' needs and expectations.**

C. Enhance the physical campuses to reflect and support the UMW student-centered focus.
D. Ensure a culturally diverse and inclusive UMW educational experience.

Suggest a set of specific objectives for meeting those goals with recommended benchmarks, timetables, or measures and identify the office(s) and/or position(s), and/or constituents responsible for meeting those objectives:

Goal A Objectives:

OBJECTIVE A: Create a developmentally-based experiential learning experience that extends from first enrollment through completion.

Benchmarks for Objective A:

By 2011, create a true, integrated first-year experience that incorporates in-class and out-of-class learning. [JOINT VENTURE: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS]

By 2012, begin exploration/creation of a senior capstone program/project for all students. [ACADEMIC AFFAIRS]

OBJECTIVE B: Establish programs and connections which clearly and explicitly link the UMW education to career

Benchmarks for Objective B:

By 2010, begin proactive, semi-structured career development experiences which demonstrably link the UMW education to career options. [CAREER SERVICES]

By 2015, 35% of UMW students will participate in an internship experience for academic credit. [CAREER SERVICES]

By 2012, establish formal, expanded alumni and employer networking database, easily accessible for students/faculty/ staff. [CAREER SERVICES]

By 2012, establish connections with alumni and Fred'burg community to support internships, networking, informational interviewing, job shadowing, etc. [CAREER SERVICES]

OBJECTIVE C: Encourage student leadership and student engagement

Benchmarks for Objective C:

By 2011, establish a comprehensive student leadership program. [STUDENT ACTIVITIES]

By 2011, create a graduate assistantship program. [ACADEMIC SERVICES]

By 2012, study reward system for student leadership to include possibility of academic credit and/or stipends. [STUDENT AFFAIRS, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT ACTIVITIES]

By 2012, students will report on the NSSE survey, stronger connections between students and faculty/staff members. [ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, FACULTY, STUDENT LIFE (for surveying)]

OBJECTIVE D: Encourage wellness and life-long learning

Benchmarks for Objective D:

By 2011, include a wellness education component in University programs.

By 2011, students will report on the NCHA survey, increased awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle and life-long learning. [STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISION]

By 2012, as part of a coordinated institutional research effort, alumni will report a direct application of what they learned to the management of their lives and careers after college

OBJECTIVE E: Provide a distinctive student life experience by strengthening school spirit and pride and support for UMW

Benchmarks for Objective E:

Beginning in 2010, for each of the next 5 years, the number of students who report participation in and satisfaction with campus activities will increase. [STUDENT ACTIVITIES]

Encourage more use of mascot, Eagle logo; use branding to make interior public spaces and exterior locations on the campus more UMW identifiable. [PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, CAMPUS-WIDE OFFICES]

Collaborate with the community and local merchants to display welcome signs and UMW logos. By 2010, a committee will be formed to plan an appropriate on-campus recognition to honor the University's namesake, Mary Washington.

Goal B Objectives:

OBJECTIVE A: Administrative policies and services will support students' initiatives and programming.

Benchmarks for Objective A:

By 2010, review and, as necessary, modify administrative policies to reduce red tape, redundancy and obstacles. [VP STRATEGY & POLICY STAFF/STUDENT TASK FORCE].

By 2012, establish a student ombuds office. [VP STRATEGY & POLICY]

By 2012, establish an Office of Graduate Student Support Services (VP STRATEGY & POLICY)

By 2010, establish a comprehensive University events office and provide a streamlined process for planning University events. [VP STRATEGY & POLICY; PUBLIC SAFETY & COMMUNITY SERVICES]

OBJECTIVE B: UMW staff and services will be informed and responsive

Benchmarks for Objective B:

By 2010, staff and faculty members will participate in on-going employee development and training aimed at enhancing student service [HUMAN RESOURCES]

By 2011, as part of a coordinated institutional research effort, student survey instruments, specific to UMW, will be developed to obtain feedback to better inform efforts to improve student services [PLANNING, ASSESSMENT, & INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH]

OBJECTIVE C: Communication will be effective

Benchmarks for Objective C:

By 2010, establish ongoing, joint student/admin task force to consider policy/ communication issues, including website navigation. [VP STRATEGY & POLICY]

Goal C Objectives:

OBJECTIVE A: Create additional and more comfortable interior and exterior spaces to promote community

Benchmarks for Objective A:

By 2011, evaluate all building furniture needs and begin a systematic replacement program.

[FACILITIES; RESIDENCE LIFE; BUSINESS & FINANCE (for budget)]

By 2011, evaluate outdoor spaces on the campuses for placement of seating to encourage social interaction and enjoyment of campus beauty. [FACILITIES; STUDENT LIFE]

By 2012, identify, design, and create spaces on the campuses to better serve social, study, and meeting needs. [VP STRATEGY & POLICY; FACILITIES; STUDENT LIFE; PLANNING, ASSESSMENT...]

OBJECTIVE B: Campus buildings/spaces will reflect the UMW identity and encourage school spirit

Benchmarks for Objective B:

By 2011, offices will be supplied with UMW identifiers for display. [PRESIDENT'S OFFICE; MARKETING]

Conformity of UMW identifiers/branding will extend to EagleVillage [FACILITIES; MARKETING]

Goal D Objectives:

OBJECTIVE A: Expand the Study Abroad program.

Benchmarks for Objective A:

Percentage of traditional students who expect to take part in study abroad or complete an international learning experience prior to graduation will increase by 5% per year with first increase in 2011. [INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC SERVICES]

OBJECTIVE B: Increase and support campus diversity of students, faculty/staff.

Benchmarks for Objective B:

By 2011, evaluate and supply enhanced, integrated supportive services for students, faculty, and staff with diverse backgrounds [HUMAN RESOURCES; DISABILITY SERVICES; CAMPUS-WIDE OFFICES]

By 2012, as part of a coordinated institutional research effort, students will report improved learning effectiveness due to diverse community. [PLANNING, ASSESSMENT....; FACULTY]

By 2010, enhance outreach and support services for students/faculty/staff with disabilities. [DISABILITY SERVICES; HUMAN RESOURCES]

OBJECTIVE C: Increase positive University interactions with local Fredericksburg community

Benchmarks for Objective C:

By 2012, as part of a coordinated institutional research effort, students will report positive interactions with the local community. [PRESIDENT'S OFFICE; MARKETING]

By 2012, the percentage of students participating in service activity in the local community will increase to 35% by 2015. [STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (COAR)]

Every 5 years, UMW will conduct (or employ someone to conduct) an economic impact study to demonstrate the benefits of UMW to the local community.

Offer a very brief summary of where UMW is vis-a-vis your area and/or a summary of the major issues/challenges/opportunities associated with your area:

The University is making progress in a number of ways. For instance, over the past several years UMW has begun to develop a culture of assessment, regularly administering the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and utilizing the results to guide a range of institutional improvements. The University has invested significant resources in developing the Lee Hall project, to provide a one-stop delivery of key student services and to enhance the quality of student life. The addition of the Eagle Village project soon will make a significant positive impact on the quality of student life. Student life has been enhanced by the investment in new intramural and recreational playing fields, as well as the Fitness Center. The Anderson Center will add another major facility to improve student life. And a number of great strides have been made in the areas within the Student Affairs division, including Student Activities and Community Service. However, there is still much to be accomplished.

Many of the challenges that the institution faces are related to funding for facilities improvements. UMW is beginning to address the long-overdue renovation of residence halls by awarding the contract to renovate Mason and Randolph and update the heating/cooling systems of Alvey and New. It will be essential to continue systematic improvements to the residence halls in order to improve overall quality of student life. While UMW is adding important new venues for students to gather and socialize on the Fredericksburg campus, such as the Underground and the new deck at Woodard, the University lacks a true student center with integrated services and facilities. Woodard is not well designed to meet this function and, in addition, it is in need of major renovation and improvement. Student organization offices and the offices of Student Activities, Residence Life, and Judicial Affairs should be located together in a one-stop shop, similar to the Student Services Center in Lee Hall. The student center on the Fredericksburg campus should also have sufficient meeting rooms, food service, lockers, and lounges to meet the needs of students and to be a true heart of campus for student interaction and involvement. A similar venue to meet the needs of commuting, adult students should also be considered for the Stafford campus.

Other challenges relate to the need to more fully integrate the student life experience with the academic experience at UMW. Also, the University needs to engender among students and other members of the community a greater sense school spirit and pride in affiliation with UMW. Finally, another challenge is to ensure that the University provides a diverse learning community

where students regularly interact with those of different backgrounds and experiences, so that students will be well prepared to assume their places in a multicultural and global society.