BUILDING THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE: A UMUC WHITE PAPER   DRAFT

In May 2015, the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland authorized the University of Maryland University College to institute a new business model. The purpose of that step was to enable UMUC to achieve the organizational and operational flexibility needed to be an effective competitor in the rapidly changing environment of online education. The details of that new business model were outlined in a White Paper that w
formal approval.

Even as UMUC is moving ahead with the process of implementing the new

<u>UMUC Today</u>

UMUC is already unique within the University System of Maryland. While its academic programs are numerous, diverse, of high quality, and academically rigorous, it bears little other resemblance to a traditional university: its students are not young, it has no dormitories, or football team. Moreover, it has been engaged in a process of rapid transformation over the past two decades that has served to further distinguish it from other public institutions in the State.

Some of the differences are familiar to you. UMUC has always focused on adult learners who are usually older than traditional college age students, have competing priorities including work and family, and require different support systems than students on a residential campus.

Another attribute of the university is its widely dispersed student body. Starting with educational offerings for the military in Asia and Europe in the 1940s, UMUC has always been more than just a Maryland institution. With the rapid explosion of online courses, UMUC now is among the largest universities in the world and competes in a field where change is constant.

In FY 2014 UMUC enrolled approximately 85,000 students worldwide. Of these, 87 percent took at least one course online; UMUC had more than 243,000 online course enrollments and offered 981 distinct courses online. In fact, the vast majority of students worldwide complete their degrees predominantly online.

Currently, UMUC offers over 70 undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs. Every program can be completed online, with the exception of the Doctor of Management program, which has weekend residency requirements. Due to increasing student demand for learning online, no program is now offered entirely onsite.

These characteristics of the present day institution have led to distinctive approaches in:

- o Its programmatic offerings,
- o The role of faculty at UMUC,
- o The focus on technology-enhanced learning, and
- o Reliance on data-driven decision making.

These attributes form the foundation on which UMUC expects to continue evolving its academic model in response to an international education market that will change in ways and whose future shape no one can accurately predict today.

In the following sections, the White Paper first describes the current configuration of each of the elements referred to in the preceding paragraph. Then,

the likely next stages are presented with the recognition that change will be continuous.

Finally, a concluding section discusses a range of potential new ventures that go beyond the current boundaries of what we now know as UMUC. The central goal of this entire enterprise is to create and continuously adapt an educational institution that provides high quality education to a growing market of students in Maryland, the nation, and the world.

Academic Programs at UMUC

From a starting point of adult students taking most of their courses online, the nature of academic programs   their development, focus, learning assumptions and relationship to the world of work   is different at UMUC than at most traditional universities.

The degree program is the basic building block of academics rather than the individual course. That relatively simple statement is in fact a radical idea within contemporary higher education. The primary focus in creating any particular academic degree   and it may be easier to think first of graduate programs   is to identify the learning objectives and skills that are the intended outcomes for a student taking the program.

Using that premise, every course as well as the sequence of courses is tied to the learning objectives. Learning by doing, and doing repeatedly, will be built into each program through the inclusion of certain skills in multiple courses. The goal is(uenclu)4(sijg3a)

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Every institution has a culture, and for any employee   faculty or staff

to teaching. At UMUC, we have been steadily and systematically moving in that direction. At UMUC, with its emphasis on working students acquiring professional skills and with faculty who are practitioners in their fields, the mentor model seems particularly appropriate. Making it clear to future faculty hires that they are expected to be mentors rather than sages will help bring about a transformation. Training and mentoring for faculty will also help change the teaching model.

All of this really is a work in progress. The approach to teaching described in this section is an essential part of the overall educational model that UMUC is in the process of creating. Some of it is already in place, but the model will continue to evolve over time.

Technology and Learning

UMUC is already well known as a leading online university. The fact that many of its students take their courses through the Internet rather than in a classroom is really just the tip of the technology iceberg.

Two of the most familiar aspects of higher education take a totally different form at UMUC than was the case for anyone who attended college before the digital age.

First, UMUC does not have a library in the traditional sense that most people use that term. No stacks, no card catalog, no multi-floor building. ••– ‡ ƒ † á ï• library is entirely online and its full array of resources is available to anyone regardless of where they are in the world. Books, periodicals, government documents, business reports and just about anything else you can think of can be accessed by a student through her or his computer.

The digital library provides more materials more readily than any traditional library. The collection continues to expand and the types of materials that will be available in the future have no obvious limit. Not subject to time or distance examine primary documents, and access rare materials in a way that was never possible in a traditional university library.

At UMUC librarians support learning design and development by finding learning resources for program chairs who can then use them as part of the program and courses. They also are involved in the ongoing search for high quality open educational resources.

This exciting resource does require learning a new set of search and research skills, but students are exposed to those skills throughout their academic program at UMUC. The skills in turn become a critical asset in lifelong learning whether at UMUC or after graduation.

In addition, UMUC is moving toward final stage of a plan to totally eliminate the use of publisher textbooks and to instead provide all students in all courses with access to open-source

forums, supporting materials, and evaluation procedures into a class in an online format accessible to students. In 2013   2014, it moved to a new LMS with similar functionality.

The sophistication and functionality of LMS platforms has continued to evolve and is now at a new stage. In its earlier iterations, most of these learning

the case.

With more tools available   multi-media, adaptive learning mechanisms, feedback devices, and data collection systems   the next generation of online courses is likely to move beyond anything that has been available in an LMS.

UMUC is working with other institutions and exploring the latest trends in online learning systems.
numerous functions are interconnected in a way that is totally invisible to the viewer. The next version of the digital user experience will be personalized to each student   rather than a standardized one-size-fits all model.

For the student, what will be important is that online classes will have more tools, more resources, and more interactive features. For the instructor, there will be more options in terms of working individually with students, monitoring and evaluating their progress, providing personalized feedback, and having a rich array of data to assess in terms of both the student and the course.

Data-driven decision-making

Online classes, if properly designed, generate enormous amounts of data about student learning. That phenomenon has resulted in the growing field of data analytics in which UMUC is both a leader and a pioneer.

While all aspects of data analytics have potential importance, the single most
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educational experience. UMUC has already identified key indicators that are present

With the overriding philosophy of wanting to help students succeed rather than fail to
acquire before continuing in the program. Additional assistance by the faculty member on a personalized basis may be required.

With the design of academic programs involving each phase building on the mastery of preceding materials, early identification can prevent a student from getting to the fourth or fifth class in a program without the skills to be successful.

In the same manner, a faculty member is able to track the progress of any student not merely in terms of the completion of a series of assignments, but instead of the mastery of the necessary skills. This tool has the potential, as it is more fully developed and as faculty become more proficient in its use, to significantly increase the completion and success rate for students.

A similar insight can be obtained with respect to the effectiveness of instruction. Given the standard approach to multiple sections of any class, it is also possible to evaluate whether students in different sections are succeeding at the same rate. This perspective can help determine whether there is something in the approach that a particular faculty member brings to the class that increases the learning of students relative to those in other classes.

This category of data can be an important tool for a program chair in evaluating faculty and in providing feedback on how to be more effective.

There is, in addition, another layer to the impact of data analytics on assessment. With programs and classes aligned to employer expectations about the acquisition of competencies most important to a specific field, a macro-analysis of, for example, a program in accounting can determine whether the graduates of that program are obtaining the desired outcomes.

sophisticated data actually characterizes decision-making in a range of administrative areas as well. As an institution with relatively little state budget support, UMUC has had to make effective and efficient use of all of its resources. For example, even though the decision was driven by an academic objective, the significant reduction of the number of undergraduate courses also had a direct impact on the utilization of faculty and on   efficiency, allowing us to focus our efforts and resources in a more targeted manner.

Another example is familiar to the Board of Regents. Two years ago, UMUC encountered an unexpected drop in enrollments. In
leadership analyzed the use of marketing and recruitment dollars, made decisions about strategic reallocation, and ended up reversing the enrollment decline while actually spending less for marketing.

All universities have institutional research offices that track major trends and try to anticipate where corrective actions may be necessary. UMUC in many respects lives on data and has developed a culture that places it at the center of decision-making.

Moving into the future

This White Paper has described a university in transition, albeit a transition

serving working adults wherever they happen to be. The university was one of the first to see and implement the educational potential offered by the digital age.

What everyone now understands about technology, and every enterprise that is based on technology, is that it never stands still. Being a leader today provides no guarantee about your standing tomorrow.

From that perspective, the single most important feature of UMUC is that it embodies a culture of innovation and change. To be a successful competitor in the world of online education, UMUC will not only have to follow through on all the efforts that have been described in this White Paper, but will also have to continue

always be successful.

Some of the initiatives described in the White Paper are very far along, such as the transition to open learning resources rather than textbooks. The effort to stay current with the needs of the economy is an ongoing process that never stops. The adaptation of teaching to a mentor model has begun, but has lots of work ahead of it.

future holds. We can however anticipate some areas in which UMUC is likely to be active.

Maryland, expanded to serving the military in Asia and Europe, and then moved into the world of online education. The latter area is one in which there is significant potential for expansion to new markets.

Can UMUC take its reputation and brand into other parts of the United States and into international settings? Online technology certainly makes that possible, but there are lots of challenges before success can be achieved in new locations. There are, of course, competitor institutions, some of them quite well known and already established. Can UMUC offer a competitively priced quality education and win a share of some of those markets?

Are there legal or regulatory barriers to overcome? Are there culture issues that need to be taken into account? Are there academic fields that UMUC does not offer currently that could be attractive in some of those markets?

These are among the issues that UMUC faces as it endeavors to be a leading provider of online education on a national and international scale.

But there are other ventures that may be on the horizon as well. An area in which UMUC has already had some success is in establishing partnerships with

businesses and with government. The opportunities for customized programs whether closed site or open to multiple clients   will continue to be explored.

Partnerships with other educational institutions could also be in the offing. Those relationships could take many forms. For example, UMUC might well be the platform and facilitator for other USM institutions to offer their degree programs online. Many are in relatively early stages of development and could save both development costs and learning curves by partnering with UMUC.

Growth in some fields occurs as the result of one business acquiring another.