

Charge to the Board of Regents' Strategic Plan Work Group

December 16, 2020

Background on the USM Strategic Plan & Context for the Charge

Section 12-106 of the Maryland Education Code (as annotated) stipulates that the Chancellor of the USM, in consultation with the presidents of the constituent campuses, shall develop an overall strategic plan that 1) is consistent with the State Plan for Higher Education, 2) sets forth “both long-range and short-range goals, objectives, and priorities for postsecondary education, research, and service provided by the University System of Maryland and methods and guidelines for achieving and maintaining them,” and 3) incorporates the goals, duties, and priorities for the University System as laid out in the Maryland Charter for Higher Education (§ 10-209) and other sections of the Code (e.g., § 12-107). The Board of Regents, Section 12-106 goes on to stipulate, “shall review, modify, as necessary, and approve the overall plan.”

Partly because the plan is a mandate imposed by the State of Maryland that must align with the broad goals and priorities for the System embedded in state statute, and partly because the System’s leadership historically has seen the plan as an important vehicle for communicating to stakeholders outside the System the USM’s vital role in promoting the economic, health, and social well-being of the state and its citizens, past plans have been primarily (though not exclusively) outwardly-facing documents. Much of their focus has been on highlighting for key external audiences how Maryland’s public university system serves the needs of the State (and therefore, why it should be appropriately supported).

In this vein, in 2010 the University System developed, and the Board of Regents approved, an ambitious 10-year strategic plan that, like the plan it succeeded, was targeted primarily at the state’s political, business, and community leaders. “Powering Maryland Forward,” which was subsequently revised and updated in 2018, laid out the USM’s goals and strategies for helping the State of Maryland maximize its potential to become a national leader (or maintain its national leadership) in such areas as college access and completion; economic innovation (encompassing not just workforce development, but basic and applied research and R&D-driven technology commercialization); academic transformation; environmental sustainability; stewardship; and eminence. As with past plans, the core of the 2010 plan, which was retained in the 2018 revision, was a statement of the USM’s mission, vision, and values, along with five overarching System goals. These statements, in combination with the scan of the USM’s operating environment, served as the predicate for the identification and development of the plan’s five major strategic themes or thrusts (increased to six in the 2018 revision) for the 2010-2020 decade. These themes, in turn, were designed to make clear to every USM stakeholder -- whether internal or external -- what the System and its institutions had committed to addressing in the areas of Access, Affordability, and Degree Attainment (Theme 1), Research, Economic Development and Competitiveness (Theme 2), Academic Innovation (Theme 3), Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (Theme 4), Stewardship (Theme 5), and Quality and Eminence (Theme 6).

Looking back at progress made under the plan since 2010, while not every goal was achieved, the System and its institutions can demonstrate strong success under many of the plan’s highest profile

goals, particularly those tied to undergraduate degree production and STEM. At 27,813 undergraduate degrees produced in FY 20, USM institutions have increased their undergraduate degree output by more than 39% since 2010 – the fastest rate of growth in a ten-year span in USM history – while undergraduate degrees awarded to underrepresented minority students (URM), an indicator added in 2018, have increased by 57% since 2010. With over 11,900 STEM degrees produced in 2020, USM institutions have increased degree production in this field critical to the State’s knowledge-driven economy by more than 112% since 2010, with undergraduate degree production in STEM increasing at an even greater clip (+121%), and STEM degree production among URM students growing even faster than that (up by 152%). Likewise, while not all measures of progress have seen growth quite as dramatic, the System has recorded continued progress since 2010 under strategic plan goals or indicators tied to such areas as extramural research, new company creation, research commercialization (added in 2018), academic innovation, private fundraising, environmental sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness savings, and the rising level of diversity of USM students, faculty, and staff.

However, as the USM rapidly approaches the conclusion of its current plan (most goals under the plan, including those updated in 2018, are set to expire in 2020), the System and its institutions, along with postsecondary institutions in general, are facing an operational environment that is more unstable than any faced in decades. From the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the near-term academic and business models of our institutions, to changes in the number and demographic make-up of our state and regional pools of prospective students, to emerging expectations for new types of training and credentialing on the part of employers, to changes in the way in which -- and the dollar level at which -- states and the federal government expect to fund higher education, including not just students and institutions but basic research, the coming five- to ten-year period is likely to be one of the most challenging the USM has ever faced.

Charge to the Work Group

In line with the oversight responsibilities set forth in Maryland statute, the Chair of the Board of Regents charges the Chancellor and members of the Strategic Plan Work Group, working in close collaboration with the institutional presidents, to oversee the development of, and present to the Board for its approval, a strategic plan for the University System of Maryland that will position the System to effectively identify and address the challenges the System and its institutions are expected to face over the next 5-10 year period. The Work Group will serve as the steering committee for development of the plan, reviewing and approving a planning process as put forward by the Chancellor and System staff, providing input on each of the major elements of the plan as they are developed and drafted, and most importantly, ensuring that input and collaboration in developing the plan is sought out and received from a wide-range of USM stakeholders, including the USM institutional presidents and their executive teams; USM’s faculty, staff, and student advisory councils; USM alumni groups or their representatives; and other State and regional political, business, and community stakeholder groups.

The plan as presented to the Board should focus on a five-year time frame, but with a goal of identifying and positioning the System to address potential challenges that may be 10 years or more out. The plan should not only continue to reflect the goal and priorities specified under the Maryland Charter for Higher Education, but also should seek to remain consistent with the vision,

goals, and commitments made under the existing plan, as deemed appropriate. Importantly, the plan should draw heavily from the recommendations, including goals and strategies, developed by complementary Systemwide Work Groups (such as those focused on Enrollment Management and the USM's Marketing/Branding) and by standing Board Committees, such as the Economic Development and Technology Commercialization Committee. And finally, given the speed with which technology and digital learning trends are expected to evolve in the coming decade, the plan should include both an expectation and process for annual review by the Board. This review process should include the opportunity to adjust and modify the plan's goals and strategies as needed in order to ensure the System is appropriately positioned to respond to any emerging needs and opportunities.

A draft of the plan should be completed and presented to the Board for its final review and vote no later than December 2021.

Questions to be Considered

- What are likely to be the most pressing challenges facing the USM and its institutions within the next five years, the next ten years? How do these differ by institution or institutional mission?
- What are likely to be the most pressing needs facing the State of Maryland and its citizens over the next five years, the next ten years? Which of these can be directly addressed by the State's public university system? Which indirectly?
- How can the USM and its institutions leverage their collective resources within the context of shared governance to most effectively and efficiently address the challenges and needs identified above?
- How can the System position itself as a national leader and model for addressing the challenges facing States and higher education systems in the next 5-10 years?
- Who is the primary audience(s) for the plan? Should it remain primarily an externally-focused document?
- How can the USM, through the strategic plan, most effectively allocate its resources so that it is positioned to address not just current strategic needs and goals, but those we will face in the future?
- How do we identify under the plan existing programs and activities that may have outlived their purposefulness and should be jettisoned as we move forward?
- How do we ensure that the vision, goals, and strategies outlined in the plan are not just forward-leaning and aspirational but also implementable and achievable?

Deliverables:

1. Review and confirm the planning process, timeline, and list of stakeholders to be consulted.

2. Review and confirm the USM's mission and vision statements to ensure they continue to reflect the expectations of the Board, Systemwide stakeholders, and the citizens of the State of Maryland.
3. Review and tighten the USM's statement of values in order to communicate in a more crisp, clear and effective way the organization's most deeply held, core values.
4. Review the five overarching strategic goals that have been in place since 2004 and determine if changes are needed, with particular attention paid to whether the goals reflect the USM's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and addressing the impacts of systemic racism.
5. Oversee the development and presentation of an environmental scan and SWOT analysis that allows the Board and System leaders to identify and determine oncoming challenges and opportunities facing the system and position the USM and its institution meet them.
6. Based on the above, and in collaboration with the System and campus leadership, help identify, test, and recommend the addition or modification of the strategic themes or thrusts under the plan, including new or revised goals and strategies tied to these themes as appropriate and the timeline for achieving these goals.
7. Ensure that the findings and recommendations of Board work groups or Board committees, including those focused on Enrollment Management, Branding, and Economic Development and Technology Commercialization, are reflected in and consistent with the themes, goals, and strategies included the plan.
8. Establish expectations for implementation of the plan, including the alignment of institutional plans and initiatives, and a process for tracking and reporting progress under the plan.
9. Coordinate presentation of the plan to the full Board for its final approval.

Work Group Composition

The Workgroup will be chaired by Regent Gonella. Because this is a Board of Regents Work Group, membership is restricted to USM Regents. USM staff, overseen by the Chancellor and his senior leadership team, will provide administrative support to the Work Group and will ensure coordination with campuses, external stakeholder groups, and any additional consulting groups as needed. The Work Group is expected to collaborate and consult closely with the institutional presidents on development of the plan in all areas. Members of the Board Work Group currently include:

Gary Attman
Ellen Fish
Geoff Gonella (Chair)
Ike Leggett
Merry Mears
Bobby Neall
Nate Sansom (Student Regent)
Linda Gooden (Ex Officio)