

DRAFT

Proposed Program Priorities

While UWM has long had a vision to be a premier urban research university, we would benefit from further refinement of our global aspiration into yet more discrete steps and subgoals.

A key strategy for UWM to achieve premier status, expressed in our *Investment Plan*, is to:

“concentrate faculty/staff in select program areas that will increase or develop coherent strength and national scholarly reputation.”

Selecting programs and areas of growth is always a challenge at such an institution as UWM with its almost 150 programs, each of which contributes to the quality of our research, teaching and service. But this is a challenge that we’ve been attacking in various ways for several years.

Hundreds of faculty, staff, students and community leaders put a face on UWM’s broad array of programs, research and service through the Milwaukee Idea. The Milwaukee Idea began the process of identifying program strengths – those already in place and those ready for development – by pledging UWM’s contributions to advancing the quality of three major themes, which have been summarized as the three Es: Education, Environment and Health, and Economic Development. Our choice of the “First Ideas” formed the core of the 17 campus-wide action plans funded by the state in the 2001-03 biennial budget. We’ve made substantial progress as exemplified by the reports of the First Ideas (<http://www.uwm.edu/MilwaukeeIdea/initiatives.htm>). In the process we’ve hired 57 new faculty and staff in departments aligned with the campus action plans – all part of our development of coherent strengths.

But these are not our only areas of growth and development. Schools and colleges have also made strategic decisions every time recruitment plans are developed – decisions that provide the faculty strength to ensure that program quality is maintained and increased. We’re not done growing and investing. But because of the state deficit, we need to extend our reach without counting on new state dollars. How do we do that? First we identify where we want to grow and then look for the resources and the structures to grow.

General strategy. To gain premier scholarly status now, we must focus on those programs which are the material out of which *national* reputations are made. Our attention should be centered on those programs which are at or are close to national prominence. To gain national visibility as a *research* university the programs will need to be connected with graduate and professional education.

This does not say that undergraduate programs are unimportant or would be ignored. We will continue to support program growth and excellence at the undergraduate level, especially in response to enrollment demands and regional needs.

We all know that there are substantial deficits in our current budgets that strain everyone. Notwithstanding those problems, we are suggesting that we still need to move forward. All universities are facing the same structural problems we are facing. But to concentrate solely on those issues without identifying areas of strength for advancement will essentially mean regressing to the mean, not moving to the leading edge.

Subsequent Steps. How do we continue our progress toward the goal of achieving pre-eminence? The Academic Deans Council has worked on this challenge since the early part of the summer, deciding as a result of extensive discussion and evaluation that our *national* reputation hinges most critically on the caliber of our graduate programs.

As the ADC proceeded in selecting areas likely to build our national stature, no one criterion trumped all others or was appropriate for all evaluations, but a number of criteria did come into play: professional rankings, prizes and grants awarded and/or grant potential, meeting important needs, and adding to our doctoral array. We also looked to preserve programs that already have achieved such recognition and to advance their recognition. We looked for programs that have the potential to reach the top tier of their reference group in the near term. In looking at possible programs which could lead UWM's march toward broader recognition, we examined the program's reference groups to see if they were sufficiently broad and visible to further UWM's reputation substantially.

Through numerous and lengthy presentations of cases and discussions, the Academic Deans' Council shared strengths and potentials of several programs and emerging areas. It was clear from these presentations that we enjoy great breadth and could, if resources allowed, build numerous programs of national prominence. In narrowing the list, consensus was built around programs recognized for strength regardless of the location within any school/college. At one point in the process deans choose only programs not in their schools/colleges. It is important that the campus community recognize this methodology in reviewing the suggested priorities and to take on, as the deans have done, a campus perspective and approach – one that recognizes that the entire enterprise benefits from strategic program selection.

Our suggested list presents a number of programs in various stages of development that we think could rather rapidly move forward UWM's reputation as a premier urban research university, particularly in the broadly construed area of environment and health. This umbrella area covers a broad range of activities, from those that are very close to traditional notions of health such as nursing and other health science areas, to more general quality of life as seen in the built environment and the cultural environment. All have significant current or potential involvement with graduate education.

This proposal for program priorities is intended as the next cohort in an expanding set of programs in which we gain prominence. We have already made progress in the first E, Education, in that our investments in urban teacher education have been recognized in the last few months with a \$20 million grant from NSF and a \$5 million grant from the

Carnegie Foundation. Next we move into the second E, Environment and Health. As we move forward in nurturing these programs, we should look to a sequence of programs that would be treated similarly.

The purpose of identifying these programs is, first, to propose protecting them from any further budget cuts that may be imposed on us in the next three years and, second, to identify additional resources to move them -- and the rest of the campus -- forward in national recognition. In alphabetical order they are:

- **Aging/gerontology/Social Work PhD.** This cluster of activities has the potential for significant grant activity and addresses issues of increasing salience in today's society. The Age and Community activity forms the nucleus for activity that is spread around campus. Crossing boundaries of social welfare, nursing, liberal arts, and the fine arts, this area has current strength, but would benefit from the integration of the programming currently under way with a doctoral program in social work. Among the top 40 of social work schools nationally, our School of Social Welfare is one of only two schools without a PhD. It is also one of the top two schools at UWM in terms of per faculty grant activity with \$3.8 million in research grants last year. Concentration of energy should lead to a nationally recognized program.
- **Architecture MA and PhD.** Already ranked 19th nationwide (*U.S. News & World Report*), this program area needs protection from reductions that may be coming to UWM because of state imposed financial difficulties. Without major physical expansion Architecture cannot grow at the undergraduate level.
- **Film MFA.** Already recognized as 15th in national rankings (*U.S. News & World Report*) and higher in some specialized rankings, we have the potential to be one of the top 5 to 10 by concentrating on independent film making. The addition of a doctoral program to enhance the current terminal MFA could make an important difference nationally. Our contribution to arts in the Milwaukee milieu will add to the attractiveness of Milwaukee as a center for cultural and economic activity.
- **Freshwater.** Unique to universities in the Great Lakes, the already well-funded WATER Institute (\$3.7 million in research grants in 2002-03) can expand its substantial external grant trajectory in an arena of increasing national concern. The evolving multidisciplinary academic department of water studies in L&S and the incorporation of water sciences into an existing doctoral program would further foster graduate training and external funding.
- **Health Sciences PhD.** Two of Health Sciences departments are highly ranked already (Clinical Lab Sciences, 4th of 261, and OT, 14th of 168). This new doctoral program in an emerging area should be able to quickly secure substantial external funding and add to our production of doctoral students.
- **Nursing.** Already a well ranked program (29th in the *U.S. News & World Report*), Nursing can make major movement with some help. Its recognized

specializations in community health form the basis for addressing substantial health disparity problem areas. Societal need, coupled with imaginative programming in the college, offer significant opportunities.

Identifying these areas does not suggest that other programs or areas are not highly meritorious or worthy of recognition. The goal was simply to find a coherent area in which we would have sufficient mass and promise to make a national impact now or soon. This strategy worked when we made investments in urban education. Investments have also been made in information rich disciplines.

Since we have committed the GPR associated with the last round of planning, we will need to find other funds to support the proposed priorities. It's likely that money could be made available from the campus share of the growth in Fund 150 money associated with our increased grant activity. It is also possible that the 20% of the increased revenue from the growth in our student population that would go to the campus could be dedicated to the proposed priorities. Together these could amount to about a million dollars.

Next steps would be to

1. **discuss** these areas with faculty, staff, and other leadership groups to see if there is concurrence with this as a strategy and with these as the identified programs
2. **ask** the programs identified in this exercise to indicate what measurable returns would accrue from further investments and a timeline for doing so. Where appropriate, a three-fold return in five years might be an explicit expectation.
3. **evaluate** the proposals coming from the priority programs and allocate the new money to them, with the understanding that not achieving the national recognition would result in loss of the invested funds.
4. **offer** assurances that the priority areas would be spared from any future budget cuts for three or so years. While we are not sure that there will be cuts levied on the campus from the state, offering the insurance against cuts can help both the legacy and the new priority programs move more confidently.
5. **highlight** these programs as either growth or legacy points of excellence and growth

Some of the ideas in this proposal may be controversial. The strategies proposed here are intended to foster campus wide discussion. We are open to analysis and invite collegial discussion.

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