UWM’s Blueprint for the Future

Introduction

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has evolved considerably since its inception fifty years ago. It has expanded its program array and reputation and now attracts over 28,000 students to its campus, many of whom now come seeking a traditional, college experience. As UWM continues to evermore effectively meet its missions in teaching, research and service, it is clear that the current physical infrastructure is inadequate to meet needs. Appropriately designed and equipped space is in short supply. By current estimates, UWM needs over 900,000 square feet just to meet present requirements, without taking into consideration new space necessary to meet an expanded research agenda, and to serve the needs of Southeastern Wisconsin in preparing the workforce of the future necessary to rejuvenate the state’s economic engine.

Overcrowding is also evident in the lack of on-campus parking — 2500 spaces available for 30,000 people who travel to the campus each day — and the resultant traffic issues the numbers of automobiles causes. Demand for on-campus housing, not a problem ten years ago, has dramatically risen and of the 12,000 applications received each year, only about 3,000 can be accepted of whom 2,000 will actually attend. This has led, among other things, to an expansion of rental properties to the periphery of campus, contributing to strained relationships with the neighborhood.
In this context, Chancellor Santiago established a task force in 2005 to focus on the physical needs of the campus in the future, providing the following charge:

“To explore future trends in campus needs related to UWM’s mission and future vision for teaching, research and service and suggest how the campus may provide the physical environment necessary to meet those objectives.”

The members of the task force (see Appendix 1) were drawn from all levels of governance at UWM and met several times during the summer months of 2005 to explore their charge. During this period, they developed and explored five potential strategies for future physical development of the campus. During the fall semester, the members of the task force discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy with diverse representative groups on and around the campus (Appendix 5).

The results of the study are contained in the following sections of the report, and it has become clear that a long-term vision of UWM’s campus is imminently necessary so that appropriate steps can be established to:

1) set parameters for any future growth
2) determine the physical space necessary to meet these parameters
3) pursue appropriate strategies to secure them.
This may not be a simple task; UWM’s physical development is linked inexorably with the UW System and the State legislature. All traditional building projects pass through a lengthy and often uncertain process before fruition (especially in times of budgetary hardship). Any development outside the state system requires either external funding or will have to rely on additional tuition raised beyond campus targets or the return of overhead generated by new research activity. More innovative strategies, such as those used successfully in the renovation of the Zelazo Center for the Performing Arts and the Kenilworth Building, are being actively explored and may provide alternative routes for development. The new North Avenue dormitory project, which broke ground in August 2006, is a good example of this strategy.

Consequently, the creation of a vision statement will help to shape the debate on the future, share the challenges that lie ahead with all constituent parties and help the university community move strategically forward towards an ideal future for UWM. At the very least, it will alert everyone to what is, and what is not, under consideration. At best, it will provide a blueprint for action that will ultimately lead to the most appropriate campus, or campuses, of the future for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
UWM: The Next 50 Years

In order to estimate the physical plant necessary for UWM’s future, it is useful to establish some limitations and qualifications of certain characteristic of the campus. The following are based upon discussions to date as to an optimum size and mix of population and building use:

UWM Seeks to Manage Its Enrollment

UWM seeks to match its available physical space to an optimal number of students and activities on the home campus. Felt by many to be at capacity, every effort will be made to meet enrollment demands, not only by existing means but also by development of alternative sites and online instruction. Given demographic projections and resource limitations, compounded by Wisconsin’s urgent need to generate as many degree-educated citizens as possible to drive our economic engine, this would seem to be an optimal goal.

The Optimal Undergraduate/Graduate Ratio Will Ideally Be 75%/25%

Many departments have adapted a policy of expanding their graduate programs to (the current campus ratio is about 18%) grow the knowledge base of the university. This is commensurate with the campus’ desire to increase the number of (Ph.D.) programs, attracting fewer but more highly qualified graduate students and bringing a higher level of expertise to the state’s economy.
University Residential Accommodation Should Be Available for At Least 4,500 Students

The current demand for a more traditional college experience has led to a huge demand for student housing, heavily outstripping available space. Students unable to be offered an accommodation contract either attend other campuses or rent local apartments or houses. Neither of these outcomes is desirable to UWM. Accordingly, a total of at least 4,500 residential spaces would be desirable. While proximity to the campus is the most efficient model, residences could be located off-site as long as they are within a 3-mile radius of campus (or no more than a 15-minute commute), readily served by public transportation or shuttle buses and built in sufficient numbers to create efficiencies of scale and a positive student experience.

Research Will Expand to Generate $100 M Per Year in Extramural Funding

An aggressive expansion in research activity will enable the university to meet many of the needs of the state’s economy, while generating additional overhead to help offset the cost of new space. As demonstrated by the Cozzens & Cudahy Research Center, high quality research space need not necessarily be located on the home campus.
While it is difficult to assess the full extent of UWM’s physical needs to meet these parameters, it is safe to say that the campus will need at least 450,000 additional square feet to adequately meet its teaching, research and service missions, coupled with an additional 2,500 living spaces, which is likely to add another 500,000 square feet to the university’s square footage requirements. Thus the total approximate space needs for the UWM campus of the future will be an additional 950,000 square feet added to the original 900,000 square feet shortfall previously identified, making a total of 1,850,000 square feet.

The question, of course, is where will such space be located. The Task Force identified five space expansion options which represent the possible strategies that could be pursued in future development:

- The Home Campus Option
- The Columbia Hospital Acquisition
- The Satellite Option
- The Scattered Site Approach
- Boundary Expansion

Based upon input from campus and community groups and extensive discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of each option (see Appendix 6), the following strategies will be adopted by UWM in meeting its physical space needs.
1. Maximize the Home Campus

For many reasons, development of the home campus is desirable. Economies of physical plant and maintenance are prevalent in a compact area, and the desirable location on the East Side makes it a popular place to work and study. However, the campus is already heavily built up, leaving few open spaces and the combination of neighborhood tensions and parking limitations make drastic expansion unlikely.

The following strategies will be adopted, however, to maximize the use of the home campus while striving for harmony with the neighborhood and the creation of an attractive, functional combination of buildings and spaces that serve the university’s needs.

- **All building spaces and functions will be assessed for campus compatibility**
  This may result in
  - activities not directly linked to teaching and other essential activities being relocated to other sites
  - More efficient use of existing spaces to meet classroom needs
  - More effective use of spaces during the day, week and year

- **All external spaces will be assessed for potential development**
  This will involve
  - Evaluation of all flat surface lots (for example, Kunkle, Cunningham and Enderis lots). Can they be developed as buildings or parking structures?
  - Review of non-developed space. While certain areas will remain undeveloped — specifically the Downer Woods — other areas should be evaluated for their development
potential, not solely as buildings but as high quality open space as benefits a major campus. The current strategy to develop a stormwater master-plan for UWM is a good example of sustainable, attractive development of currently undefined spaces.

- Review of existing buildings (for example, Mellencamp, the Fine Arts Lecture Hall, Kunkle Day Care Center). Can less efficient buildings be expanded, modified or ultimately replaced by more appropriate structures which incorporate state-of-the-art facilities and expanded parking opportunities? Can some activities (research, administrative, recreational) be moved to more appropriate sites in the city? Will Hartford Avenue School ever be available for incorporation into the campus?

**Neighborhood Cooperation Will Continue to Be a Priority**

The actual area negatively affected by off-campus student residences is relatively small. Campus activities do not affect the neighborhoods to the East, North and West in any major way, although have become problematic to approximately 30 blocks to the South, which constitutes less than 1% of the city’s blocks (7,528). Equally, the population negatively affected by comparison to the population is proportionally small. Nevertheless, efforts will be intensified to maintain and strengthen a working relationship with the neighborhood surrounding UWM (See Appendix 4 for ‘A Partnership for Change’). Many of the current issues involving students in local housing would be solved by the
development of high quality, market rate, university-controlled housing in the city in an appropriate proximity to the campus.

2. Explore Options Beyond the Campus

Regardless of space shortages, UWM believes it should develop a significant physical presence in Southeast Wisconsin beyond the home campus to better serve the needs of the community. The following conclusions were reached by the Masterplanning Task Force after an evaluation of the five alternatives for development:

- Scattered, smaller sites, although able to blend effectively into neighborhoods, were not recommended. They are too small to effectively meet the physical needs of the campus, and not economical to purchase, operate or maintain.

- Expansion of the campus along its boundaries was also not recommended. While there has always been a latent fear of this strategy in the neighborhood, it is not practical, as the campus is largely ringed by residential properties. However, the success of the Zelazo Center for the Performing Arts, which is positively perceived by neighbors and campus alike, coupled with the tenuous future of the ecclesiastical edge to the South, might make future expansion, solely along the Kenwood Boulevard perimeter, desirable to both the campus and the neighborhood.
• Despite local opposition from the neighborhood association and alderman, it was generally believed that the opportunity to acquire Columbia/Saint Mary’s Hospital should remain a high priority, given its proximity to the heart of campus and the quality and quantity of space available. While actual cost remains uncertain and may make purchase unfeasible, the campus should continue to explore the possibility of acquiring the site, especially as the timing of Columbia/Saint Mary’s move and UWM’s ability to acquire some state funding coincide. Perhaps a good model of development to follow is the Kenilworth project, where campus/neighborhood negotiations have led to a rich mix of uses and a generally perceived win-win situation for all. Certainly, if UWM is not part of the final CSM development, it is hard to predict if a future user may benefit or disadvantage the area.

• The concept of a satellite campus was deemed worthy of further exploration, in tandem with the CSM strategy. It was popular as it can reduce crowding on campus, distribute students throughout the geographic area and ease the parking and congestion problems on and around the campus. The notion of a UWM presence in other parts of the city also has political benefits, although the major challenges will be in financing. As articulated earlier,
UWM’s ability to pay for space outside the traditional state funding mechanism is limited, and market rate rental/construction will be difficult. However, opportunities do present themselves (for example, Capitol and Humboldt, Waukesha Campus, etc.) and should be thoroughly explored. In each case, the site should be large enough to include a discrete grouping of activities so as to minimize inconvenience to students, faculty and staff traveling between locations and provide a sense of identity to the satellite. For example, a residential site should include recreational facilities, food opportunities and some teaching space, where appropriate. Opportunities to acquire satellite space at lower than market rate should be a priority, as funding limitations mean that an opportunistic ‘deal’ is more likely to succeed.