

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Priorities for UW-Madison
in the Next Decade



DAVID WARD, CHANCELLOR

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REFLECTIONS



David Ward, Chancellor

Our complex, vibrant community of over 60,000 students, faculty, and academic and classified staff, augmented by an impressive network of alumni and friends, is rich with talent and energy to lead us into the next century. For the past two years, I have been talking with and listening to many of you individually and in groups on campus and across the state and beyond — taking the measure of the place from many perspectives.

This document about our future is an outgrowth of that dialogue. It is offered as a framework for further discussion about how we can build on our traditions and respond to the challenges of the next century. This venture is not new; at least once within each generation, the university has established a blueprint for the future.

The most recent report, “Future Directions,” published in 1988, provided an explicit translation of our commitment to teaching, research, and outreach, based upon the university’s formally adopted mission statement.

The Future Directions report has served as a useful guide during the past several years, but it is now time to renew and enhance our vision in a response to rapidly changing conditions. Changes in our funding, in the public’s perception and confidence in higher education, and in the demand for high levels of accountability, along with exponential changes in the scope, delivery, and organization of knowledge, are challenging the limits of our current organization. We have developed a view of our mission: to create, integrate, transfer, and apply knowledge. Being a leader in the advancement and diffusion of knowledge in the next century will involve new approaches to learning and its organization.

We have a tradition of excellence upon which to build and much to preserve, but I believe it is time for the university to start doing some things *differently* — not just doing the same things *better*. To achieve these ends, we need to pursue our goals within a shared vision of a university that will be as outstanding in the next century as it has been in the past and is in the present.

That vision comprises some different ways of advancing, organizing, and disseminating knowledge which, in my judgment, will be necessary to maintain our position as one of the leading institutions of higher education in the world.

I have broadly defined some key strategic priorities to help us move toward that goal. I urge you to participate in our continuing dialogue. Regard these strategic priorities as a map that highlights our major destinations, leaving the choice of routes and vehicles to the creative energies of the university community.

I welcome your thoughts and your comments as together we shape our vision for the future.

LEARNING THEMES FOR THE FUTURE

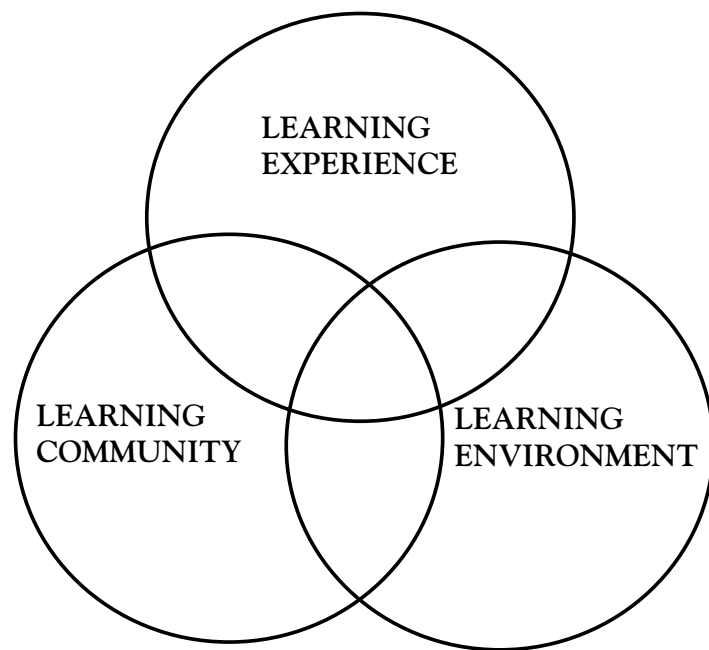
Learning is the central concept that will help us develop our vision for tomorrow's university and plan the strategies to attain that vision.

Throughout the 20th century, major advancements in knowledge have been achieved by an almost continuous increase in the division of intellectual labor. Most horizontal efforts at syntheses, to connect our specialties, have become separatist ventures themselves. In the 21st century, however, I believe strongly that we will need a wide range of interconnections among and between our academic and administrative units. We need to create a better balance of vertical and horizontal activities in the way we are organized.

Because we are so comprehensive in our programs and services, we must agree upon how to fabricate some unifying interrelationships among our highly specialized activities. One way we can do this is by emphasizing learning as our unifying goal. Our familiar refrain is that we perform teaching, research, and public service, and we typically view those as distinct and separate activities. In reality, they are creatively connected as learning.

By dividing learning into three broad themes — the learning experience, the learning community and the learning environment — we can begin to outline our vision.

The three broad learning themes, while comprised of distinct activities, have overlapping aspects that work together to strengthen each theme.



◆ THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Discovering new knowledge, refining it in the marketplace of ideas, and putting it to work is at the heart of the learning experience in great universities like this one. The excitement of discovery attracts the best scholars and students, energizes our teaching and learning, and makes possible our greatest contributions to the quality of life. To pass this excitement to the next generation, we must reinvigorate the role of research in the learning experience. Our curriculum has always involved research experiences in the form of fieldwork, laboratories, and seminars, involving students in the thrill of discovery.

There is a transformation of the learning experience going on inside and outside the classroom. In large part, this transformation involves the vast expansion of knowledge itself and also new technologies of learning. Should classroom lectures be replaced by combinations of video lectures, self-paced learning with interactive software, and computer-driven access to libraries, with the classroom as the focus of discussion? We have the beginnings of a campus dialogue on these issues.

How well students learn in the classroom significantly depends on what happens before and after the classroom hour. Learning outside the classroom will play a stronger role in the university of the future. Students and faculty will spend more time working together on research projects, in residence halls-based learning communities, and in off-campus learning experiences such as internships and study abroad. Information technology and distance learning will facilitate communication and interactive learning between faculty and students in out-of-class hours. Pilot projects in residential learning communities are paving the way for large-scale transformations in the way students, staff, and faculty interact to promote learning.

◆ THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

The learning community is another component of our vision. We currently have an intellectual landscape of mine shafts, where most of us are organized in mines, working to deepen the mines, but with not much reflection about corridors that should link us to other miners. We are so poorly connected that we have greatly weakened our shared sense of learning.

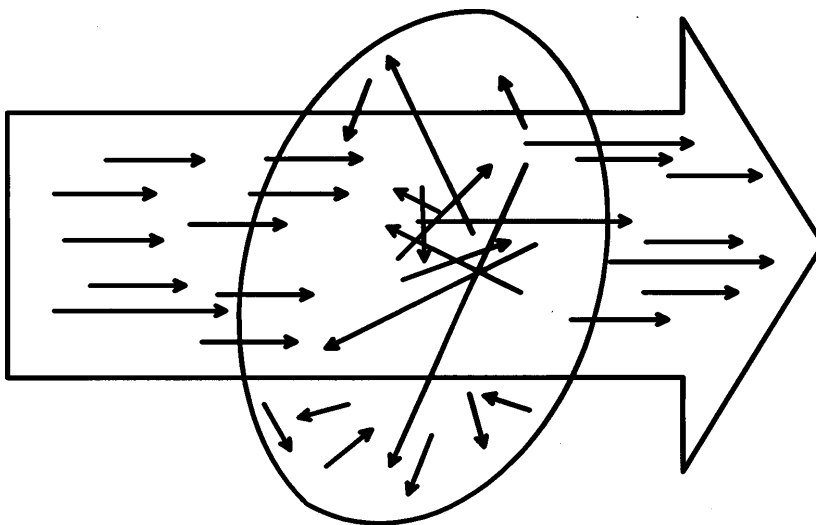
I encourage us to think about a different organization that is much more balanced with horizontal structures. We should not abolish the mine shafts; they are too important and they are the source of much of our knowledge. However, we do need to strengthen the commitment of our specialized units with a stronger awareness of our institutional mission.

What kind of community are we? One of the changes of the last 40 or 50 years is that we have created highly specialized academic departments and support units. While we may be collegial within discrete work units, we have lost our strong sense of connection with those in other parts of the university. We have to encourage a sense that belonging to UW-Madison involves membership in a learning community that encourages people to collaborate and to deal with challenges in the spaces between the units. The boundaries of our learning community need to become somewhat more fluid, while maintaining the rigor of the disciplines and the quality of our services.

I believe this type of double loyalty is essential to the welfare of our institution: While you may devote loyalty and creativity to your profession, your department, your unit or your service, you also must be loyal to the institution and collaborate in moving toward an institutional mission.

We also need fluidity in the boundaries of the university itself, viewing all education from elementary and secondary schools to post-graduate as a learning continuum. We need to value the talents of the full and rich range of our own society and, as a global institution, to extend and deepen our international commitments.

While creativity thrives in an environment that supports critical thinking and entrepreneurial endeavors, ultimately these creative energies must join in moving an organization forward.



There is a great demand for “just in time” continuing education, and we can do that at least as well as anybody else. We should expand post-graduate short courses that allow people to come back to us and — in a brief, but sustained, way — continue their learning at any point in their careers. Correspondingly, we have to stress the value of a general education for a future that may involve four or five jobs rather than a lifetime career in one place. Specialized knowledge no longer lasts for a lifetime, nor even a decade. Communicative skills, quantitative skills, and critical thinking have the virtue of longevity and transferability.

▶ **THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Finally, there is the learning environment. The learning environment at UW-Madison right now is the result of a process that constructs program-specific buildings one at a time. One of our great challenges is to build spaces that have flexible programmatic capacities. The programmatic needs of the 20th century called for individual, specialized buildings. The programmatic needs of the 21st century will be quite different, requiring the means for quick communication and the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. We will need the kinds of spaces that serve multiple programs more effectively.

The use of instructional technology represents part of the solution to our need to communicate better, but it is also an immense challenge. The increasing national and global breadth of UW-Madison educational opportunities and activities requires application of distance education and technology to enhance learning wherever it takes place. In a 21st-century communications system, faculty, staff, and students must have universal access to networked communications and information. We need an integrated system of voice, data, video, wired, wireless, and other technologies — all aspects of instructional technology that are rapidly evolving.

To prepare our university for the 21st century, we need to assess and improve the learning experience and the learning environment so that, as a learning community, we can make our greatest contributions and advancements.



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

These overlapping themes — the learning experience, the learning community and the learning environment — are the foundation upon which we can develop our vision for the university and plan the strategies we can use to reach that vision. Several strategic priorities must be addressed as we think of this future. Once these are considered and developed further, agreeing upon specific strategies to meet the priorities will be a challenge we all can address.

I see the following to be among the most critical of our priorities.

◆ MAINTAINING OUR RESEARCH PREMINENCE.

Throughout this century, we have maintained our status as one of a very small group of preeminent research universities in the world. In large measure, this is a reflection of the fact that, in research and scholarship, “excellence attracts excellence.” Future competitive success in maintaining our position will come only if we confront the exponential growth of knowledge by analyzing our strengths and weaknesses, and making needed changes even in the face of apparent short-term disadvantages to some programs. Choosing priorities from among tough choices, restructuring where needed to meet new intellectual challenges, and avoiding complacency all are necessary if we are to maintain our preeminence in research.

◆ RETHINKING OUR ORGANIZATION.

Our current academic structure, including academic departments, degree programs, and their locations within schools and colleges, should be subjected to a fresh analysis and changed to meet the needs of the future. We must then test the validity of our judgments against concrete results and be prepared to make further adjustments in a process of continuous analysis and improvement. Our current organization is based not on comprehensive planning, but rather is the product of incremental change, *ad hoc* decisions, and gradual accretion. To be prepared for the demands of a world in which knowledge is being quickly transformed, our organizational structure needs flexibility to keep pace.

◆ RECONCEPTUALIZING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION.

In the past five years, we have made impressive progress in modernizing registration, improving class access, upgrading advising, and better integrating teaching and research opportunities. To be a leader in the 21st century, we need to do more than reform our curriculum. We must take full advantage of an environment in which students will learn from one another, and do so in residential settings and other venues outside the traditional

classroom. Technology will cause learning to take place 24 hours a day and across state and national boundaries. Traditional course structures, including the length of classes, semesters, and class periods, will change. New mixes of disciplines and other repackaging of university programs will occur. These changes must drive us to examine and recast the traditional parameters of knowledge delivery to best support learning for students.

◆ ENCOURAGING
COLLABORATION.

We will need to change the policies and practices that inhibit interdepartmental collaboration, no matter how the campus is formally structured. The boundaries of our learning community must be made more permeable while maintaining the rigor of the disciplines and the identity of our service units. We have to recreate a sense that the university encourages faculty, staff, and students to communicate across departmental boundaries and to deal with challenges that are located in the spaces between the disciplines.

◆ MAXIMIZING OUR
HUMAN RESOURCES.

Diversity of viewpoints, diversity of backgrounds, including gender and ethnic differences, as well as variety within academic specialties, are all vital components of the intellectual life of this great university. This not only contributes to the academic vitality of the campus, but also makes us more competitive among our peer institutions. While parts of the campus have made significant gains, our progress in reaching greater gender and ethnic diversity overall has been too modest. If we are to be successful in the future, we must tap the rich potential of all our citizens by incorporating them into our faculty, staff, and student body.

◆ UPDATING THE
WISCONSIN IDEA.

As we approach the next century, we need to view the university not as the sole source of learning, but increasingly as an educational partner with a variety of public and private institutions, including businesses and industries. To do this, we must listen to and learn from the state's citizens, their elected officials, our alumni, and other friends. The communication revolution places us in the midst of a worldwide learning community. The challenge is to find new ways to originate, adapt, and transfer expertise from this global environment to the people of Wisconsin.

◆ **JOINING THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY.**

The revolution in communications technology and the development of a world economy require that we plan for an expansion of international partnerships, including student, faculty, and staff exchanges, as well as cross-national education in its many forms. Many more of our students in the years to come will need exposure to the world economy and to international cultures. Developing relationships with international alumni and institutions abroad is a key element to our success in preparing programs to meet this need.

◆ **USING TECHNOLOGY WISELY.**

Information technology is a powerful tool. In order to harness this power, we must rethink our traditional approaches to teaching, learning, and conducting research. Self-paced learning, interactive video, and other new technologies give us the opportunity to rethink the instructional role of faculty and staff, and to redefine student learning. We face the challenge, however, of making sure that all parts of the campus have useful technologies with appropriate training available to them and that we choose wisely from among the many alternatives we have in this area.

◆ **RENEWING THE CAMPUS PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.**

We are faced with the challenge of needing physical improvements to a campus built, on average, 40 years ago. We lack the public resources to make all the improvements we need, requiring us to create partnerships with private donors. To help guide us in making needed changes, we must join with our neighbors and the City of Madison to develop a master plan that will see us through the coming decade. As we seek to enhance the campus environment for our own use, through comprehensive planning, we must also consider the needs of visitors and all those who are physically challenged by the existing campus.

Although these priorities include many challenges and encompass much of what we do, they represent only a beginning. Other priorities may join the list during the forthcoming dialogue to occur both on and off the campus.



EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE

Our university has a marvelous tradition of embracing challenge. As Curti and Carstensen, the historians of the university's early years, observed, "the university displayed a willingness, from the very beginning, to embrace new disciplines, to absorb into its course of study activities which would have been anathema to the older, traditional colleges and universities." (Curti and Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1848-1925.*)

As we work to transform our campus, we build upon the solid foundation established by our predecessors. We have a similar obligation to enhance the foundation for the next generation of scholars and learners. To be a leader in the 21st century, we must do no less than redefine the very nature of the learning process.

As we discuss campus priorities for the coming decades, we do so within the confines of political and economic realities set by the State of Wisconsin. State funding for the campus has remained constant for the past four years and appears certain to decline in the next two. As state funding continues to diminish — now totaling less than one-fourth of our budget — gifts, grants, and earned income will become even more significant. We also know that student enrollment is likely to remain relatively constant.

Reallocation of scarce resources will be needed if we are to address many aspects of the priorities we are setting. This makes our discussion all the more important, because, for the most part, we will not have new revenues with which to address our priorities.

I am confident that we have the collective will and the capacity to make these difficult choices. Those who came before us made difficult decisions, and their willingness to do so has made us a world-class university. We must build upon their foundation and embrace the challenge to design and implement a vision for tomorrow's university.

UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN
MADISON