

Executive Summary: Planning for the Future of Case Western Reserve University

Case Western Reserve University has thousands of alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends whose experiences often link them primarily to one or another unit of the institution. While differing somewhat in their perspectives, these groups are united in encouraging the University to reach the highest levels of achievement in the future.

What We Bring Our University has several characteristics that help it to realize its aspirations. Notable among these are:

- Presence of outstanding students, faculty, and staff who together create and deliver educational and research programs widely recognized for excellence and innovation.
- Location in University Circle, and affiliations with neighboring cultural, artistic, and health care institutions and with the broader community
- Broad, deep, and well-developed commitments to both health and technology.
- Strong local, regional, national, and global partnerships in research and education.
- International diversity in our student body and through faculty efforts in other countries.

Priorities and Challenges The last six years have seen considerable change at the institution, and the past year has been particularly tumultuous. The years immediately ahead will require unusual efforts to sustain quality while generating the further growth and development we all seek. Priorities to be addressed in these efforts include the following:

- *Retain highly accomplished faculty, while recruiting new members needed for growth and increased diversity.* A highly competitive international environment and an imminent wave of retirements require us to act promptly. A steady institutional focus on this priority will help clarify decisions to be made at all levels and in all disciplines throughout the University..
- *Identify and nurture the next generation of leaders, especially women and minorities in fields where they are under-represented.* This is particularly important in developing faculty-based leaders – chairs, center directors, and deans – as well as administrators to support academic programs. This effort must begin with an honest appraisal of leadership capacities at all levels, along with the recognition that collaborative, peer-to-peer leadership skills are just as important to the University as the more traditional hierarchical variety.
- *Develop and sustain interdisciplinary programs.* Strong core programs are necessary but insufficient in the 21st century, a period in which enhancement of academic programs requires investments in interdisciplinary, multi-site collaboration in most advanced areas. The University needs to develop systems to identify and nurture collaborative opportunities while removing barriers related to financial accounting for cross-school collaborations.
- *Improve governance and communication.* Pressing for change at a pace or in a manner inconsistent with our systems and processes has lessened trust and optimism among faculty, staff, and students, and some alumni no longer see the institution they loved as students. We need to strengthen mechanisms for shared governance, and to communicate more effectively on all fronts.

- *Make realistic strategic plans, using processes that connect goals with operational plans and resources.* The University struggles with the tension between what it seeks to be and what it perceives itself to have attained within the limitations of its systems and resources. A key step toward realizing our goals is to ensure that each school and college engages in a realistic, faculty-intensive strategic planning effort, followed by a broader process leading to a University-wide plan under which the institution can effectively move toward its goals.

To address these priorities, we must stabilize the University's leadership and strengthen its financial base. Investing all of our reserves in new initiatives has led to operating deficits that were expected to be offset within a few years by increases in gifts and grants. As a result of overly centralized decision-making, inadequate monitoring, and weak communication systems, however, this revenue recovery plan stalled. Federal research funding has ceased to grow, and some mid-career faculty with successful research programs have departed. Recent, difficult expense reductions have moved the University toward balance, but further movement needs to come from the revenue side, primarily through fund-raising, along with continued vigilance over spending.

The University We Seek To Be As a research-intensive university, we seek to provide renowned leadership in cutting edge research and education, building on our historically strong areas of excellence as well as groundbreaking initiatives in emerging fields. Case Western Reserve's transitional status over the past year has ruled out a formal, long-term, University-wide strategic planning effort during that period, however. To ensure that we emerge from the current situation as a strong, well-directed institution, it is essential that individuals across the campus responsible for guiding us through more immediate issues maintain a clear sense of key characteristics of several of the groups who constitute the University, traits that we believe are essential to the institution's continued development:

- *Students:* A diverse student body of well-prepared, engaged, and critically-minded individuals who understand the importance of intellectual achievement, personal integrity, and social responsibility – and the complexities inherent in developing all three.
- *Faculty:* A set of professional learners with diverse background and interests who passionately pursue discovery, create context, and value wisdom. They enhance learning at all levels using educational programs that link experiential, active approaches to cognition with more traditional methods. These outstanding, outspoken men and women are willing to engage in spirited debate and to take forceful action to contribute to their fields, their institution, and society as a whole.
- *Administration and staff:* Responsible and responsive men and women guided by a deep respect for learning and by the notion of service as the key to effective academic and administrative leadership. In close collaboration with students and faculty, they shape our human, technological, and physical systems in ways that advance growth and improvement in programs and the engagement of all the people who constitute this community.
- *Alumni.* Men and women who share among themselves and with their *alma mater* a lifelong relationship of enduring and mutual benefit. They are the institution's strongest supporters, but they are also its most trusted and respected critics.
- *Trustees:* Board members who understand, promote, and support the fundamental values of academic life and the unique role of a research university in society. Their decisions reflect

clarity of motives, commitment to the concept of shared institutional governance, and dedication to the University's goals and objectives.

Moving Forward A university planning document typically trumpets programs to be launched, buildings to be constructed, and people to be recruited, perhaps leaving unstated more fundamental matters such as building relationships and systems along with new campus facilities, and often not leading to program improvements commensurate with initial expectations. This document is different – more realistic, and incorporating internal as well as external considerations – but it reflects no lesser aspirations. We have focused on processes and perceptions, presenting a distillation of campus views of the challenges before us at this time. Several of these challenges can be addressed without large expenditures: fixing processes for shared governance and transparency of communication, for example, may be the fastest way of bringing about substantial improvements to our institution. We believe that a new strategic plan that addresses these priorities and challenges will be eagerly embraced by the University community, and we suggest the following guiding principles be used in that planning process:

- Build on strengths that offer comparative advantages, while supporting other excellent programs that add value to our academic mission.
- Make the capacity to nurture and support interdisciplinary activities a hallmark of the University.
- Integrate the full costs of sustainability into plans for new programs.
- Embrace diversity as a foundation for academic and administrative improvement.
- Seek continuous feedback from all constituencies, and adopt transparency as a basic characteristic of planning.

Achieving the University's long-term goals depends on this combination of self-awareness, imagination, and dedication.

University Plan Steering Committee
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