September 14, 2012

Charge to the Steering Committee

The university has developed significantly over the last 25 years, enhancing its educational, research, and community service programs. The recent and dramatic reduction in financial support from the state creates a new set of challenges and opportunities for the university. The purpose of the strategic planning process is to consider how we can build upon our current strengths, seize emerging opportunities, and meet our challenges. In doing this, we will continue our development as a leading public research university and accomplish our educational, research, and community service missions.

The planning process will rely heavily on the work of a steering committee and five task forces with their associated working groups. Each of the five task forces and their associated working groups will be responsible for a specific area. The five areas are: Student Success and Academic Excellence, Research and Creative Endeavors, Community Engagement, Diversity, and Internationalization.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the overall planning process, including the preparation of the final version of the plan. The Steering Committee will be responsible for integrating the recommendations of the task forces, creating an integrated financial plan to address the university’s financial challenges, prioritizing recommended initiatives, and considering ways to fund prioritized initiatives.

For the Steering Committee, we would like you to consider the following questions as well as others that may arise during your deliberations:

1. Over the last 25 years, we have made substantial progress as a major research university. Given our current strengths and challenges, as well as the input from the task forces and our community, what should be our goals and aspirations for the university’s further development in the next 3-5 years? What initiatives should the university undertake in the next 3-5 years to move us forward in the focal areas of the task forces, as well as in other substantive areas?
2. Given dramatic reductions in our state appropriation, how can the university enhance its financial strength and stability? What integrated financial initiatives should we pursue? How can we foster an entrepreneurial culture to assist in generating new resources? The university has substantially reduced its costs in the recent past. Are there other initiatives we can, and should, undertake to further reduce costs to ensure efficiency?

3. Given your identification of potential aspirations and initiatives for the next 3-5 years, as well as the proposals on enhancing financial strength, how can we order and prioritize potential initiatives so that we can continue to make substantive progress toward our goals?

4. The university’s dramatic progress as a research university often produces discrepancies between public perceptions of the university and our substantive achievements in education, research, and community service. How should we better inform regional and national audiences of our excellence? What is the role of national rankings?

The final report from the Steering Committee is due no later than March 29th. The final report should be no longer than 30 pages and should integrate the task force recommendations and integrated financial plans. The final report should include identified goals and recommended initiatives. The resource requirements of all recommended initiatives should also be included. Relevant background information and the detailed rationale for recommended initiatives should be included in appendices.

To facilitate the engagement of the campus community, the Steering Committee and each task force should hold an open forum to solicit comments and opinions from the university community. Members of the community should also be invited to communicate suggestions, in writing, to the committee and task force chairs. All written reports and recommendations should be presented in draft form on the strategic planning process website, and members of the community should be invited to comment prior to the completion of any report.

Thank you for your contributions to the planning process. The planning process represents an important opportunity to reflect on the present state of the university and to consider how we can make choices—identifying goals and planning initiatives—that will help us meet our challenges, seize opportunities, and fulfill our mission.

With best regards,

Elliot Hirshman
President

William F. Eade, Ph.D.
Professor

Rob O’Keefe
President, Associated Students