**UMR 2.0 Optimizing Distinctiveness- A Strategic Framework**

In 2015, this Strategic Framework will become a Strategic Plan.

*Vice Chancellor Carrell’s portion of the 2014 State of the Campus Address (pp. 1-3) with Post-Script Sample Inquiry Ideas (p. 4).*

**State of the Campus Excerpt:**

**Thank you, UMR alumni!**

Hearing graduates’ stories is the best affirmation available for the incredible and lengthy groundwork that led to the creation of the University of Minnesota Rochester. I know many of those founding visionaries are in the room – people who were central to that lengthy and successful campaign - thank you!!! These graduates’ stories also reveal an intense commitment of faculty, staff, and administration during the start-up period...shall we call it UMR 1.0?

What a launch you’ve had! Amazing!!! In my previous work with faculty and other leaders, I have long been committed to strength-based action planning so as I began at UMR, my goal was to listen and observe – to discern the arenas of distinctiveness – the strengths – of this university.

The campus surely serves the workforce development needs of Rochester and the region, but truly - that is only the beginning of the success story you are crafting. What I’ve been documenting during my onboarding process are arenas of national distinctiveness in higher education.

So – through this newcomers’ lens, how is UMR nationally distinctive?

**Customized Undergraduate Health Education**

First, UMR is providing *customized* undergraduate health care education. The key word here is customized. Many undergraduate pre-health programs across the country require the declaration of a career path early in the college journey – a student’s change in direction can result in incredible costs in time and in dollars. At UMR, there is a foundational core of courses in the first two years accompanied by integrated career exploration. Students can then work through a highly supportive process to plan their customized capstone experience - - and to prepare for their next steps – still able to finish in four years.

As you heard from graduates Nicole, Evan, and Jessica those next steps can be highly varied and are rarely what the student expected as they began college. UMR has designed a curriculum that anticipates students’ self-discovery – hey – we celebrate it! This customizable structure is efficient *and* exemplary – keeping student costs curtailed while also allowing for student exploration and discovery.
Individualized Care, Attention, and Guidance

This customization in the curriculum is accompanied by intentional and individualized care for each student. Now certainly, nearly every college or university in the country would claim to care for their students, but the structures in place at UMR ensure that caring is operationalized—and even measurable. National distinctiveness related to this characteristic comes primarily and uniquely through our Student Success Coaches, with each student in relationship with one coach for the four-year journey. These coaches also facilitate required courses to support student development in systematic ways during that journey, as students transition to college and learn to be critically reflective in the first year, explore careers, and plan their capstones—and futures. Other strong contributors to this arena of distinctiveness include...

- Just Ask – for academic support,
- One Stop - support for just about everything else,
- Undergraduate Academic Assistants,
- flipped classrooms with high-levels of instructional support, and
- of course –
- a genuine and widespread commitment of the UMR community to caring for each student.

That mad love for students is real...seriously – Nicole, Evan – Jessica – and all the others out there...what’s not to love? UMR is structured to support the development of human potential – what a privilege.

UMR is nationally distinctive.

Learner-Centered Core Shaped by Ongoing Learning Research

Being “learner-centered” is in vogue in higher education, and for good reason. As an enterprise, we’re no longer focused on transmitting content or weeding people out—what a horrible image—instead, we educators model master learning to inspire inquiry and innovation for the 21st century.

This ongoing learning research is a key national distinguisher for UMR. While some universities now allow learning research to contribute toward tenure, UMR requires this research focus for faculty thus attracting brilliant individuals with a passion for teaching and learning. This unique research requirement for faculty is intended to inform decisions to keep this university on the cutting-edge of effectiveness and efficiency in student learning and development. This required and shared vision is designed to fuel evidence-based decision making and the generation of best-practices that address nation-wide higher-education challenges.

UMR is nationally distinctive.
Community Immersion

Like no other university in the country, UMR is supported by and integrated into the community of Rochester and our many partners, including the internationally-acclaimed Mayo. Our degree in Health Professions highlights this immersion, with students learning in Mayo facilities. Physically, fiscally – we are immersed. If you’ve seen our master plan you’ve heard the term “community campus” – that’s who we are and how we will soar. Students experience that immersion in many ways, including required community-based learning. That community-based learning - or civic engagement – is a research-based “high-impact practice” according to the American Association of Colleges and Universities. How better to equip future healthcare professionals for the grand challenges of health care that will emerge in the 21st-century?

UMR is nationally distinctive.

Collaborative Culture

UMR is also organized for collaboration. In the area of team teaching we are poised to do inquiry that will inform national best practice as we ask, “How does team teaching enhance student learning and development?” We also use our collective teaching community to generate student learning questions for research faculty in investigate. Such a culture of inquiry or community of practice also aligns with national best practice and is exceptionally rare.

We reject outdated yet common higher education structures that organize faculty into silos of independent contractors. Even our shared faculty space reflects this commitment to collaboration. This structure allows collaboration among all who encounter the student - forming connections that serve learning in new ways.

UMR is nationally distinctive.

Connected Curricular Experiences

With our healthcare relevant content, transferability of concepts across courses, and interdisciplinarity – we integrate the student learning experience. Such integrative learning is an aim for many in higher education across the U.S. Even our student learning and development outcomes are integrated into curricular and co-curricular endeavors.

UMR is nationally distinctive.

I am grateful to have joined this innovative and intentional community. Together, we will use this strength-based strategic framework to investigate fascinating questions. We are Driven to Discover: How will we optimize these strengths – these arenas of UMR distinctiveness - to empower student learning and development?
**Post-Script: Sample Inquiries for Optimizing UMR Distinctiveness**

*How can we create ongoing opportunities for a collaborative culture of inquiry across roles and units in the UMR community?*

*How can we implement intentional habits of interaction to optimize collaboration and contribute to the flourishing of faculty and staff?*

To empower student learning and development, *how can we increase coordination and intentionality in this collaborative environment?*

*In this customized and personalized approach, how can we best serve the mental health needs of our students as future healthcare professionals?*

*How can diversity and inclusivity further the distinctiveness of the UMR student experience?*

*In order to optimize collaboration and community, how can we enhance trust and respect across varied staff and faculty roles?*

As we seek to optimize our “learner centered core fueled by learning research”, *how will institutional-level assessment intersect with faculty research?*

*How will we move from “mapping” the Student Learning and Development Outcomes to intentionally scaffolding, coordinating, and assessing proficiencies or competencies related to the outcomes?*

*How will we document, assess, and enhance the efficacy of the Student Success Coach model?*

*How can we coordinate the strategic sharing of UMR’s teaching & learning stories and learning research?*

*How can we document, assess, and enhance the efficacy of the Capstone experience?*

*How can we document, assess, and enhance the efficacy of our community-based learning as experienced in the Co-Lab?*

*How can we document, assess, and enhance the efficacy of our Writing Integrated Curriculum?*

*How can we document, assess, and enhance the efficacy of the “integrative” quality of our undergraduate healthcare curriculum?*

As we continue our collective and individual research, *how can we expand our types of measurement of student learning in order to add value to results?*

*How does the UMR “integration” (or “connected” curriculum) relate to the national conversation on assessment of integrative learning?*