VISION * FOCUS * ACTION

Improving the Learning Environment

The President’s Recommendations to Improve the Learning Environment

University of Louisville

October 1, 2002
# Improving the Learning Environment: Executive Summary

## Focus One: Improving the Academic Challenge

### Proposed Actions:
1. Assess Academic Standards and Student Performance in General Education
2. Expand the University’s Efforts in Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning
3. Improve the Quality of Undergraduate Instruction
4. Provide Instructional Technology to Support Instruction
5. Review Expectations for Graduate and Professional Student Admission and Performance

## Focus Two: Improving Student and Support Services

### Proposed Actions:
1. Improve Undergraduate Advising
2. Designate a Graduate School Student Advocate
3. Streamline Administrative Processes for Students
4. Improve Career Counseling and Development Services
5. Increase Faculty Availability to Students

## Focus Three: Improving the Cultural and Racial Climate

### Proposed Actions:
1. Develop and Implement Unit Diversity Plans
2. Establish Service Training Programs for All Faculty and Staff
3. Include Cultural and Image Indicators on Unit and University Scorecards
4. Develop and Implement Assessment Plans for all Administrative and Support Units
5. Expand Partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities

## Focus Four: Improving Communications

### Proposed Actions:
1. Promote and Enhance the Recognition and Reward of Teaching Excellence
2. Establish Departmental Teaching Awards
3. Establish Web Sites for All Full-Time Teaching Faculty
4. Improve and Cultivate Alumni Satisfaction
5. Improve Internal Communications With Faculty and Staff

## Project Management

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VISION * FOCUS * ACTION

Improving the Learning Environment

Executive Summary

Background
The Kentucky Postsecondary Educational Improvement Act of 1997 signaled the beginning of a new era for the University of Louisville by establishing a goal for the University to become a nationally-recognized metropolitan teaching and research university. In preparation for the new challenges and realities confronting the University of Louisville, the Board of Trustees and President implemented two strategic initiatives that are designed to facilitate the achievement of this vision for the University’s future.

1. The Strategy for Excellence is the University’s strategic planning rubric for 1998 - 2004. The Strategy identifies five strategic themes that convey and support the overarching vision for evolution of the University into a nationally-recognized metropolitan teaching and research university. The Strategy was implemented through the development of unit enabling plans that are consistent with and support the strategic themes.

2. The Challenge for Excellence is the University’s operational plan to achieve national preeminence as a metropolitan teaching and research university. The Challenge promotes this goal by identifying programmatic areas of distinction and opportunities for excellence within the current scope of academic programs at the University of Louisville. The Challenge also articulates specific commitments to support the goal of becoming a preeminent metropolitan university. These range from recruiting and retaining the best scholars to creating a culture of excellence and entrepreneurship throughout the University. The Challenge implements the plan to achieve national preeminence by identifying selective investments through a ten-year funding strategy.

The University of Louisville has made enormous strides in its efforts to become a premier, metropolitan teaching and research university since the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Reform Act was signed into law by Governor Patton in 1997. Among other achievements, the University reinvested in and reorganized undergraduate education and the honors program, significantly increased its total extramural funding in the sciences and engineering to $47,300,000 in FY 2001, raised the average ACT scores of entering freshmen to 22.7 in the Fall of 2001, increased the University’s endowment to $503,200,000 in FY 2001, and increased the number of endowed chairs to 75 in FY 2001. As the University continues its progress toward national preeminence, it is important to ensure that the quality of its services to the University’s many constituents and its sense of community are nurtured commensurately.
Toward that end, the President and Provost created the University Task Force on the Institutional Environment on October 16, 2001. The Task Force was established in response to University-wide discussions about the results of several assessments of the educational experience at the University of Louisville. From August 29, 2001 to December 5, 2001, the Provost’s Office organized eight presentations across the University to discuss with the University community results from the (1) 2001 Alumni Survey sponsored by the Council on Postsecondary Education, (2) 2001 National Survey of Student Engagement, (3) 2001 Retention Management Survey sponsored by the Reach Center, and (4) 2000 Employee Satisfaction Survey.

The data from these surveys revealed many successes and strengths in the University’s academic and cultural environment. They also revealed some areas where change is needed in order to improve services to students, employees, and alumni. Among the areas of concern identified in the assessments are:

1. Instruction in General Education
2. Instruction in the Undergraduate Major
3. Academic Advising
4. Career Counseling
5. Academic Skills that Prepare Graduates for Work
6. Level of Academic Challenge
7. Student Interaction with Faculty
8. Supportiveness of the Campus Environment
9. Overall Satisfaction with the Experience at the University

The data also included indications that some undergraduates and faculty were not likely to recommend the University to others. The data demonstrate that the University’s internal image and sense of community should be improved. The data suggest that there are needed changes in aspects of the academic and cultural environment if the University is to achieve the vision established in the Strategy and Challenge for Excellence.

The Task Force on the Institutional Environment was asked to develop and report specific action plans to change and improve (1) the quality of instruction, the availability of faculty to students, and the preparation of students for employment; (2) the advising and career counseling of students; and (3) the University’s internal image. The task force was asked to place special emphasis on improving the responsiveness of academic, administrative, and support services to the University’s students, ensuring that the initiatives are consistent with and contribute to the vision for the University’s future contained in the Strategy and Challenge for Excellence.

The work of the task force was divided into three subcommittees: Undergraduate Education, Graduate and Professional Education, and Institutional Image. Each subcommittee was chaired by a dean and staffed by a senior-level central administrator whose duties pertain to the Subcommittee’s focus. The subcommittees worked over the course of the fall semester to develop action-oriented initiatives designed to respond to the charge given to the task force.
Principles for Change
At the outset of its work, the Task Force recommended that the University adopt, publicize, and promote six principles, adopted from Ernest Boyer’s, *Campus Life: In Search of Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1993), that define the University as an educational community.

The University of Louisville is:

1. an educationally purposeful community, a place where faculty, staff and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on campus.

2. an open community, a place where freedom of expression and civility are powerfully affirmed.

3. a just community, a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

4. a disciplined community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

5. a caring community, a place where the well being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

6. a celebrative community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

The task force believes that these principles should be thoroughly infused into the culture and everyday work of faculty, staff, and students at the University of Louisville. They should govern interactions among the University’s many constituents within the learning environment. These principles shape the initiatives recommended by the task force in this report.

The subcommittees provided the President and Provost with initial reports on December 14, 2001. The initial reports were then disseminated to the University community for reaction and commentary from January 9, 2002 to February 8, 2002. The Subcommittees were given an opportunity to review the commentary and, if necessary, to revise their reports based on feedback provided by the University community. The final reports were provided to the President and Provost on March 8, 2002. The final subcommittee reports, which include many initiatives intended to improve the learning and cultural environment of the University, are attached as appendices to this document.

A Focused Action Plan
While all of the initiatives proposed by the Task Force have considerable merit, the President and Provost believe that additional refinements were necessary in order to ensure a focus on those initiatives that have the highest priority or will have the most significant impact on the University.
VISION * FOCUS * ACTION identifies specific actions for improvement grounded in a focus that follows from the University’s vision for its future. Our focus on the implementation of specific actions to address needed improvements in the learning environment will help fulfill the University’s vision articulated in the *Strategy* and *Challenge for Excellence*. The recommendations from the Task Force on the Learning Environment suggest a focus on four areas:

1. The Academic Challenge.
2. Student Support Services.
3. The Cultural and Racial Climate.
4. Communications to Faculty and Staff.

The action plan includes specific initiatives. Each initiative includes a description and rationale for the action, assigns leadership and timelines for completion of initial phases of the initiative, and identifies estimated costs and an approach to evaluation of the initiative, where these are known. The implementation of each initiative will entail additional refinement by the faculty, staff and administrators who are responsible for them. The recommendations constitute a focused action plan intended to supplement the University’s efforts as outlined in the *Strategy for Excellence* and the *Challenge for Excellence*. 
Improving the Learning Environment:
A Focused Action Plan

Focus One: Improving the Academic Challenge

1. Proposed Action:
   Assess academic standards and student performance in general education.

Description and Rationale:
Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) demonstrate that first year students at the University of Louisville rank the academic challenge significantly lower than do students at other research universities. Their perceptions are more positive by the senior year. The quality of the first year experience and student perceptions of standards and quality are important factors in student retention and degree completion. The improved perceptions of undergraduate students are probably related to their experience in the major. Data from NSSE and the CPE Undergraduate Alumni Survey suggest student dissatisfaction with general education. The quality of classroom instruction and student outcomes are dependent upon an effective assessment process. In this initiative, the University will assess academic standards and student performance in general education with the intention of improving student learning and satisfaction in general education. There is some urgency to this initiative because the University must have an outcomes-based assessment system for general education to conform with the new accreditation criteria of the Southern Association of College and Schools.

Leadership:
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will work with the undergraduate units that deliver courses in the general education program in the development of an assessment process for general education. Faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences must have considerable representation and input into the general education assessment process. The coordination for assessment of general education will be the responsibility of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Timeline:
The assessment plan should be reported to the President and Provost by July 1, 2003, for implementation in the Fall 2003 semester.

Fiscal Impact:
Unknown at this time. Cost implications will depend upon the type of assessment system developed through the process described above.
**Evaluation:**
This initiative will be evaluated by the implementation of an effective and credible assessment system for general education. The assessment system of general education should provide data to evaluate student outcomes in general education. The system should include indicators and actions that help improve the University’s performance on the NSSE and the Council on Postsecondary Education’s (CPE) Alumni Survey. The University will benchmark its performance on the NSSE and CPE Alumni Survey and expect improved performance when data are collected again in 2003.

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2. **Proposed Action:**
*Expand the University’s efforts in promoting excellence in teaching and learning.*

**Description and Rationale:**
One of the most important recommendations from the Task Force is the creation of a University-wide center to support teaching and learning. The need for University support for promoting excellence in teaching and learning is undeniable and the University will respond. In July 2000, the University established the *Delphi Center: Enhancing Teaching and Learning.* The *Delphi Center*’s primary mission is support of faculty who use technology in their teaching. While the emphasis of the *Delphi Center* is on technology-based instruction, it is clearly a center devoted to improving teaching and learning. It already possesses facilities on the Belknap and Health Sciences Center campuses, considerable expertise, and resources that can support our institutional efforts to improve teaching. The University will proceed by expanding the mission and the staff of the *Delphi Center* to include support for teaching excellence for traditional, face to face teaching and learning. The University will begin this process immediately by searching for a co-director of the Delphi Center who will provide leadership for faculty support in teaching excellence. Among the responsibilities of the co-director will be the promotion of appropriate methods for measuring effective teaching and learning. These methods will provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the needs of a wide variety of disciplines, teaching methods, and styles.

**Leadership:**
The Associate Provost responsible for the *Delphi Center* will take the lead in organizing the position approval, the search process, and the restructuring of the Delphi Center’s mission and operation.

**Timeline:**
The search process for a co-director of the Delphi Center and a reconfigured statement of its mission and organization should conclude by March 1, 2003.
**Fiscal Impact:**
The University will receive approximately $135,000 from the Council on Postsecondary Education to help support faculty development activities. The University will allocate the entire amount to support (1) the co-director and (2) programming for workshops, conferences and materials for faculty support in improving teaching and learning. These funds will not be used to support the development activities of the Delphi Center in technology-based teaching and learning.

**Evaluation:**
This initiative will be evaluated by the completion of the search process, the development of a plan for faculty support and evaluation for AY 2002 – 2003, and participant evaluations of workshops and other development activities.

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3. **Proposed Action:**
*Improve the quality of undergraduate instruction.*

**Description and Rationale:**
The Subcommittee on Undergraduate Education identified five initiatives for improving undergraduate education. These include:

a. Assign general education courses and introductory courses in each discipline to high quality instructors in order to increase student satisfaction at this level and to ensure that entering undergraduates have more positive instructional experiences from the onset of their education at UofL.

b. Involve undergraduates in research, involve top researchers in undergraduate education, and expand the use of inquiry-based teaching methods in more undergraduate courses.

c. Assure that personnel documents governing tenure, promotion, merit increases, and post-tenure review require, reward and value good teaching. Personnel documents should also indicate that evidence of poor teaching requires developmental responses to assist the faculty member to improve performance.

d. Use of flexible work plans to place our best teachers in the classroom.

e. Hold all units accountable for achievement of expected outcomes in the educational experience at the University. Tie rewards and recognition to the accomplishment of these outcomes.

These initiatives can be effectively pursued by the units that teach undergraduate programs and led by the deans of those units. The initiatives are likely to require some institutional coordination and oversight to ensure their completion.
Leadership:
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will coordinate a task force of deans of the units that have undergraduate programs to pursue these initiatives.

Timeline:
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will report back to the President and Provost by July 1, 2003, on unit and institutional plans to address these initiatives.

Fiscal Impact:
Any fiscal impact of these initiatives, with explanation and justification, should be reported by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Evaluation:
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will identify performance indicators and baseline data for each initiative. With an emphasis on student outcomes, improved scores on the NSSE and the CPE Alumni Survey, as well as observed improvements in program outcomes assessment reports, should be included as performance measures for these initiatives.

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4. Proposed Action:
Provide instructional facilities, equipment and technology, and laboratories adequate to support quality instruction.

Description and Rationale:
The University must develop an instructional technology plan, benchmark needs for instructional technology, and measure progress toward meeting them. The subcommittees on undergraduate education and graduate and professional education made reference to the need to increase the infusion of technology into the educational experience at the University.

Leadership:
The University’s Academic and Administrative Technology Committee will develop a plan that identifies needs and institutional priorities for instructional technology. The AATC must work with the academic units in developing its needs assessment and plan for the future.

Timeline:
Although the rapidly evolving character of instructional technology requires an evolving plan, an initial outline should be developed for implementation by March 1, 2003.

Fiscal Impact:
Given the array of hardware, software, training needs, and vendors, there is literally no end to the amount of money the University can spend on instructional technology. It is imperative, however, that the University have a clear assessment of needs and an
evolving plan for instructional technology costs for support staff and training faculty are likely to be high.

**Evaluation:**
The AATC should include a model for benchmarking progress in implementing an instructional technology plan at UofL.

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5. **Proposed Action:**

Review expectations for graduate and professional student admission and performance.

**Description and Rationale:**
The stakes in graduate and professional education at the University of Louisville are higher than they have ever been. Are the students admitted to graduate and professional education at the University adequately prepared for advanced levels of work? Are they receiving a quality education? Are they progressing toward their degrees at an appropriate pace? The academic units, in collaboration with the Graduate School, should review and enforce admissions, graduation, and performance standards for graduate students. The units and Graduate School should determine the expectations for quality in graduate education and develop appropriate admissions standards, curricula and performance standards. The units and the Graduate School should recognize the contributions of graduate faculty and graduate students to teaching excellence by the development of significant University and unit awards for the 2002 – 2003 academic year.

**Leadership:**
The Dean of the Graduate School will organize a process by which the graduate faculty and unit deans will identify the quality issues in graduate student admissions and graduate education. The Graduate Dean will work with the unit deans and the Graduate School to assess and monitor the quality of graduate and professional student performance.

**Timeline:**
The Dean of the Graduate School should provide a final report, including analysis and recommendations, to the Provost and President by July 1, 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**
Any fiscal impact from this initiative will be shaped by the specific recommendations originating in the unit and Graduate School discussions.

**Evaluation:**
As part of these discussions, the units and Graduate School will identify quality measures for inclusion on unit scorecards and program assessment reports that will be reviewed annually by the Graduate School and the Provost’s Office.

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Focus Two: Improving Student Support Services

1. Proposed Action:

*Improve undergraduate advising.*

**Description and Rationale:**
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will work with the unit deans to prepare and implement a plan to reorganize the undergraduate advising system with central coordination, assessment, and accountability for performance. The reorganized system must address each of these points from the task force’s subcommittee on Undergraduate Education:

a. Centralize coordination and accountability for quality standards and outcomes under the Dean for Undergraduate Studies;
b. Optimize partnerships and talents of professional and faculty advisors to link academic decision-making with career planning;
c. Restructure unit and University policies to decrease staff and student burden in navigating the advising process;
d. Improve information dissemination and communication by advising staff and all staff and faculty who respond to student inquiries and problems;
e. Implement a tracking and reporting system to ensure resolution of student complaints;
f. Train and develop advisors, faculty, and other staff regarding the role of advising and its relationship to retention, positive academic outcomes, career development, and student satisfaction;
g. Continue implementation of the student information system and expand training associated with it; and
h. Develop and implement a QMS questionnaire on student satisfaction with undergraduate advising.

**Leadership:**
The Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Undergraduate Units, and SGA Leadership will be responsible for restructuring academic advising and will work with the unit deans to develop a reconfigured system.

**Timeline:**
The plan should be reported to the President and Provost by March 1, 2003, for full implementation by the Fall 2003 semester.

**Fiscal Impact:**
This initiative is primarily a restructuring of existing activities and relationships. However, some costs may be incurred for staff and faculty training and the development of a complaint resolution and tracking system and an assessment questionnaire.
**Evaluation:**
The effectiveness of the reconfigured advising system will be assessed by data from the complaint tracking system, the QMS questionnaire, the NSSE survey, and the CPE Undergraduate Alumni Survey. Data from these surveys will be reviewed by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the deans of the undergraduate units, and the Undergraduate Council for the development and implementation of future improvements in the new advising system.

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2. **Proposed Action:**
*Designate a student advocate with the Graduate School.*

**Description and Rationale:**
This is a time of enormous change for the Graduate School at UofL. Among other things, the Graduate School is being relocated to the Houchens Building and is assuming more responsibility for the admissions and records management of graduate students. As the Graduate School continues its transformation, it will be increasingly important to ensure that the University is responsive to student inquiries about the status of their applications and enrollments, as well as their progress toward their degrees. Additionally, the Graduate School has a critical role in coordinating relationships with academic units. In order to optimize administrative services to graduate students, the subcommittee on Graduate and Professional Education recommended the appointment of an advocate as the single point of contact for resolution of graduate students’ questions about academic policy, applications, enrollment status, progress toward degrees, and other concerns, ensuring that administrative issues pertaining to admission, enrollment, financial aid, and progress toward degree are resolved promptly and unambiguously.

**Leadership:**
The Dean of the Graduate School will be responsible for designating and supervising a student advocate, or otherwise creating a student advocate function within the Graduate School Office.

**Timeline:**
This appointment should be made no later than March 1, 2003, to assist graduate students beginning with the Fall 2003 semester.

**Fiscal Impact:**
Any costs for this function will be financed through resources within the Graduate School’s existing budget.

**Evaluation:**
The Dean of the Graduate School will be responsible for supervising the work of the Ombudsman and developing a query and complaint resolution tracking system.

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3. **Proposed Action:**

*Streamline administrative processes for students.*

**Description and Rationale:**
The cultivation of a responsive, “student-friendly” environment at the University of Louisville is partially dependent on changes and improvements in administrative units, particularly those that interact directly with students. The Graduate School, Admissions, the Registrar’s Office, Housing, Parking, Financial Aid, and the Bursar’s Office are all administrative offices that have direct interaction with students. To improve the integration of administrative points of contact as students navigate administrative processes at the University, it is important to review how these offices interact with students and how well students are served by them.

**Leadership:**
The Provost will convene the leadership of these administrative offices in order to (1) review current practices and recommend appropriate changes within each area and, (2) discuss opportunities to streamline processes across support units to improve service to students.

**Timeline:**
The Provost will provide a report to the President on recommended changes by July 1, 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**
The fiscal impact of this initiative is unknown at this time. It is possible that streamlining services will enable the University and these administrative offices to recoup and reinvest expenditures in these areas.

**Evaluation:**
The most important source of information on improvements in these areas are student satisfaction data provided by the Quality Measurement System, the CPE’s Undergraduate Alumni Survey, the NSSE, and assessments made by these administrative and support units.

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4. **Proposed Action:**  
*Improve career counseling and development services.*

**Description and Rationale:**  
For both undergraduate and graduate students, the University must improve its provision of early information to prospective and new students about program expectations and careers. The objective of this initiative is to improve the distribution of information about careers and career development. Using web sites, promotional materials and orientation sessions, the academic units and the University’s Career Counseling Services must improve the dissemination of information about the linkage between academic programs and careers. The infusion of this information can be achieved through many venues, including career development skills in curricula through seminars, workshops, or specific course content. Where appropriate, the undergraduate and graduate educational experiences should help prepare and socialize students for employment upon the completion of their degrees.

**Leadership:**  
The Executive Director of Career Counseling Services and the Counseling Center will work with the deans, admissions, and the Graduate School to develop career development materials for inclusion in unit plans to communicate with their students.

**Timeline:**  
The Executive Director of Career Counseling Services will report on the implementation of this initiative through the Vice President for Student Affairs to the Provost and President no later than March 1, 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**  
Costs associated with this initiative will be absorbed by the academic and support units involved.

**Evaluation:**  
The Executive Director of the University Career Center will provide the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Provost and the President with an evaluation of University and unit support of the infusion of career development materials into information provided to students throughout their academic careers at UofL.

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5. **Proposed Action:**  
*Increase faculty availability to students.*

**Description and Rationale:**  
Faculty availability to students is accomplished through (a) physical presence that fosters and facilitates student-faculty interaction and communication, such as office hours and appointments, and (b) a variety of mediated formats, such as web sites, e-mail, voice mail and paper mail. In addition, academic units hold social or academic events where students and faculty interact. The assessments clearly indicate that our
undergraduate students and alumni believe that some faculty are not sufficiently available to students. Therefore, we must improve current practices through:

a. The inclusion of faculty availability in faculty performance reviews,
b. Communications to students and the University community about the availability of faculty,
c. Assessments of faculty availability to students through course evaluations and program satisfaction surveys, and
d. Electronic and/or physical office hours for school and departmental offices.

Leadership:
The deans are expected to review the issues specific to their units and report on needed changes and initiatives the units will implement to improve the availability of faculty to their students.

Timeline:
We should proceed on this initiative by asking the unit deans to review and report to the President and Provost by March 1, 2003.

Fiscal Impact:
This initiative should have no fiscal impact since institutional funding to support faculty/student interactions is already included in unit budgets.

Evaluation:
Improvements in student perceptions of faculty availability will be measured by institutional performance on the NSSE and the CPE Undergraduate Alumni Survey, by unit data on QMS questionnaires, and student evaluations of courses.

***
Focus Three: Improving the Cultural and Racial Climate

1. Proposed Action:

   Develop and implement unit diversity plans as components of a University-wide diversity plan.

   Description and Rationale:

   One of the most crucial steps in institutionalizing our diversity infrastructure is the development and implementation of a University-wide diversity plan. The plan will focus on enhancing diversity in employment, student composition, curriculum, climate, programs and services and through diversity education for faculty, staff and administrators. The University Diversity Plan Development Task Force is charged with designing, initiating, overseeing and supporting the process that will produce this plan. The Diversity Task Force has revised the Planning Framework and Guidelines and developed a Diversity Planning Manual. It has requested that the units now develop a diversity plan for initial implementation in 2002-2004. The work of the Diversity Task Force and the units will be incorporated as part of VISION * FOCUS * ACTION.

   Leadership:

   The University Diversity Plan Development Task Force will be responsible for working with the academic and administrative units to develop and implement the diversity plan.

   Timeline:

   The Diversity Task Force has established several deadlines: (1) By July 15, 2002 each unit must complete a “Diversity Assessment,” and (2) By October 1, 2002, units must complete draft diversity plans. The Diversity Task Force will review all drafts by October 15, 2002 and may request revisions which are due by October 31, 2002 for implementation by 2002.

   Fiscal Impact:

   Unknown at this time. The units are likely to incur costs, depending on the specific initiatives in their plans.

   Evaluation:

   The Vice Provost for Diversity and Equal Opportunity and the Commission on Diversity and Racial Equality will be responsible for the evaluation of this initiative.

***

2. Proposed Action:

   Establish “service training” programs for faculty and staff.

   Description and Rationale:

   Organizations that develop reputations for high quality service appear to have one thing in common: they train their employees on the importance and techniques of
appropriate service. For this initiative, the University will develop and implement programs to train and assist faculty and staff in providing service to the University’s many constituents, including its own employees. The intent of this initiative is to thoroughly infuse a constituent-centered, student-centered, service ethos into all work processes at the University.

**Leadership:**  
The President and Provost will work with each of the deans and vice presidents to develop service training programs that are appropriate to each academic and administrative unit at the University. The University’s leadership will ensure that training programs are responsive to the needs of constituents and will look for opportunities to share resources and opportunities for service training.

**Timeline:**  
The President and Provost should ensure that each academic and administrative unit has a service training program in place by March 1, 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**  
Unknown at this time. The University is likely to incur expenses in the financing of training programs and materials on cultivating customer and constituent satisfaction.

**Evaluation:**  
Data on improvements on constituent services will be collected through the CPE’s Alumni Survey, the NSSE, QMS data, and the University’s Employee Satisfaction Survey.

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3. **Proposed Action:**  
*Include cultural and image indicators on unit and university scorecards.*

**Description and Rationale:**  
The unit and University Scorecards provide a convenient synopsis of progress toward meeting major strategic objectives. The inclusion of cultural and image performance indicators on the scorecards will convey the importance of changing the University’s cultural environment.

**Leadership:**  
The Office of Planning and Budget and the Associate Provost for Programs Planning and Budget, will work with the Deans, Vice Presidents, and Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment to identify summary measures of the cultural environment and institutional image in existing or planned satisfaction surveys for inclusion on each scorecard.
Timeline:
The Office of Planning and Budget and the Associate Provost for Programs Planning and Budget will identify appropriate indicators by March 1, 2003 and integrate them into all scorecards in the Fall of 2003.

Fiscal Impact:
This initiative should have no financial impact.

Evaluation:
The inclusion of cultural and image indicators on the unit and University scorecards will provide accessible information to determine improvements in the cultural environment and the University’s image.

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4. Proposed Action:
Develop and implement assessment plans for all administrative and support units.

Description and Rationale:
Each academic degree program at the University has an assessment process to determine effectiveness in student learning outcomes. Each is also periodically reviewed in depth by a University committee. It is appropriate that each administrative and support program develop and implement an assessment program crafted for its specific functions, clientele and circumstances. Moreover, the accreditation criteria recently approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools requires the University to have assessment programs in place for all academic, support and administrative programs. It is important that a spirit of assessment and institutional effectiveness be infused throughout our support and administrative programs, as it is in our academic programs.

Leadership:
The Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment will work with the Vice Presidents and Deans to develop assessment plans for all support and administrative offices.

Timeline:
Plans for all administrative and support units will be developed by July 2003, with initial data collection and results reported in July 2004.

Fiscal Impact:
This initiative is unlikely to have major cost implications. Units may incur some costs if they develop and administer surveys. It is likely that many units already collect data on their performance. If so, this initiative will focus on the articulation of expected outcomes, organization of the data, reporting and use of results for improvement.
**Evaluation:**
This initiative will be evaluated by (1) the development of plans for all units by July 2003 and (2) reporting of results and use of data for improvement by 2004.

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5. **Proposed Action:**
*Expand partnerships with historically black colleges and universities.*

**Description and Rationale:**
The Graduate School currently works with historically black colleges and universities to recruit high-achieving African-American undergraduates to UofL. This program has great potential to help the University achieve two strategic goals: (a) increasing the number of African-American students and (b) recruiting qualified graduate students. This program should be expanded to enable the University to recruit more graduate students from historically black institutions.

**Leadership:**
The Dean of Graduate Studies and Vice Provost for Diversity will work with the academic units to implement a plan to expand this program.

**Timeline:**
The plan to expand UofL’s recruitment at historically black colleges and universities will be implemented during the 2002-2003 academic year with the expectation that increased numbers of students from these institutions will be entering graduate programs in the Fall 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**
Funds for the expansion of this program will likely be directed toward increased administrative costs and financial aid packages for new graduate and professional students. The Dean of the Graduate School will work with the Provost and the units to find resources to finance an expansion of this program.

**Evaluation:**
The effectiveness of this program will be evaluated by the numbers of African-American graduate and professional students recruited to the University from the schools included in the partnership. The Dean of the Graduate School will set baseline figures and collect and report data annually on how the program has helped the University meets its enrollment goals for graduate and African-American students.

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Focus Four: Improving Communications

1. Proposed Action:  
   *Promote and enhance the recognition and reward of teaching excellence.*

Description and Rationale:
The recent emphasis on research and scholarship at UofL created a misperception that
teaching is undervalued or not valued as highly as research. The University must take
highly visible steps to recognize the continued and increasing importance of teaching
in the University’s mission and strategic objectives. The initiative to expand the role
of the Delphi Center helps address this need by establishing a central resource for
assisting with pedagogy at many levels. The University must also respond by
establishing and expanding high profile “mentor teacher” positions similar to the
Distinguished University Scholar and University Scholar positions currently provided
for the research mission. The mentor teachers are intended to be not only “good
teachers” but “good teachers of teachers.” There are a variety of options for
organizing these positions. Leadership and participation in faculty development
programs will be part of the expectations for faculty who achieve this status.

Leadership:
The Provost will establish a committee of faculty and academic officers, including
recent recipients of teaching awards, to establish the criteria, procedures and rewards
for mentor teacher positions at the University.

Timeline:
The advisory committee will report back to the Provost on its recommendations by
March 1, 2003.

Fiscal Impact:
The advisory committee will also be asked to develop cost estimates for the
implementation of a mentor teacher program at the University. The Provost will be
charged with finding resources within the University to pay for the program.

Evaluation:
The advisory committee will also be asked to develop a series of performance
measures or outcomes that may be used to determine the impact of this program on the
visibility, value and quality of teaching at the University.

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2. Proposed Action:  
   *Establish departmental teaching awards.*

Description and Rationale:
The intent of this initiative is to create awards for teaching excellence that will be
conferred on entire departments, and are thus distinguished from awards and
recognitions that are conferred on individuals. This type of award will further
demonstrate the value the University places upon excellence in teaching as well as
encourage collegiality and the development of departments that value and promote teaching.

**Leadership:**
The committee identified in the first initiative will also have responsibility for developing criteria and guidelines for departmental teaching awards.

**Timeline:**
The advisory committee will report back to the Provost on its recommendations by March 1, 2003.

**Fiscal Impact:**
An award of $25,000 per year for three years will be made to one department a year. Thus, by the third year after implementation of this program, the fiscal impact will be $75,000 a year.

**Evaluation:**
The advisory committee will also be asked to develop a series of performance measures or outcomes that may be used to determine the impact of this program on the visibility, value and quality of teaching at the University.

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3. **Proposed Action:**
*Establish web sites for all full-time teaching faculty.*

**Description and Rationale:**
A web page for each faculty mentor at the University will provide accessible information about faculty and their courses to students. The University has a site license for Blackboard, a course management system, that enables faculty to create and post biographical web pages and syllabi conveniently.

**Leadership:**
The Delphi Center is responsible for assisting faculty in the development of web materials and will take the lead in organizing the creation of web pages for faculty.

**Timeline:**
The University is currently renegotiating its contract with Blackboard. Assuming the parties are able to agree on costs and services, the University will begin this initiative soon after July 1, 2002.

**Fiscal Impact:**
Unknown at this time. However, this initiative will be included in negotiations with Blackboard.
Evaluation:
The Delphi staff will develop outcomes and performance measures to assess faculty participation in this initiative and student access to faculty web sites.

4. Proposed Action:
*Improve and cultivate alumni satisfaction.*

Description and Rationale:
Alumni are potentially the most effective representatives and advocates for the University. They are also a source of important information about how the University and its programs can improve. The University should work diligently to improve and cultivate the satisfaction of alumni by providing increased services to alumni and inviting alumni to contribute to the ongoing work and improvement of the University. Examples of new and expanded services to alumni might include newsletters, seminars and workshops, placement services, e-mail accounts, library privileges, free evening parking, use of athletic facilities, and reunions. Alumni can be invited to assist in recruitment, participate in ongoing quality improvement focus groups, and return to campuses to make presentations to students, staff and faculty. Alumni satisfaction with the University begins during the student experience with the University.

Leadership:
The Vice President for Development and Alumni will convene a meeting of the academic deans, Career Services, the Graduate School, and Development and Alumni to discuss the development of an integrated plan to improve and cultivate alumni satisfaction with their experience with the University.

Timeline:
The Provost will report back to the President on a plan to improve alumni satisfaction by March 1, 2003.

Fiscal Impact:
Unknown at this time. There are likely to be some costs associated with this initiative, depending on the specific programming adopted.

Evaluation:
Improvements in alumni relations will be measured through a variety of data sources already available or ongoing. The CPE Alumni Survey and the University’s Quality Measurement System contain many items that enable the University and the units to assess improvements in alumni satisfaction.
5. Proposed Action:
*Improve internal communications with faculty and staff.*

**Description and Rationale:**
The University must improve communication with faculty, staff, students and other constituents. The University needs to provide accessible, accurate information on policies and procedures, calendars and schedules, emergencies, student and employee successes, and crises. Staff and administrators must be provided with the necessary information to respond to inquiries and anticipated questions. In addition, the University is doing many, many things very well. Efforts at improved communication should foster recognition of the University’s successes and responsiveness to its many constituents. The Task Force’s Subcommittee on Institutional Image provided many examples of initiatives to improve communications with internal and external constituents that include evaluating such things as signage, handbooks and web sites to determine their usefulness and “friendliness.”

**Leadership:**
The Provost will ask the deans and vice presidents to review for implementation the specific recommendations provided by the Subcommittee on Institutional Image. The goal is to implement as many of the recommendations as feasible.

**Timeline:**
Each dean and vice president will provide an initial report back to the Provost no later than March 1, 2003 on progress toward implementation of the recommendations.

**Fiscal Impact:**
It is likely that some of the specific actions will entail the expenditure of resources. In most cases, resources will have to come from within the unit. There may be some cases where the Provost will have to assist units in identifying resources to support the activity.

**Evaluation:**
Data from student, alumni and employee surveys will be used to determine improvements in communication with institutional constituents.
Project Management

The University Provost is responsible for the management of all aspects of VISION * FOCUS * ACTION. The Provost will work with the Vice Presidents, Deans, faculty and staff as appropriate to ensure the effective implementation of the initiatives in VISION * FOCUS * ACTION. The Provost requires periodic updates on progress of each initiative and will disseminate documentation on the progress of VISION * FOCUS * ACTION through the project planning format that follows: