

Coordinating Council 2006/07
Final 2009 Report

As we prepare to celebrate the bicentennial and rich history of Miami University, the institution's mission continues to guide our work. Our mission calls us to a life of scholarship, inquiry, service, and responsible citizenship. Engagement is the medium for answering that call.

Our vision for an Engaged University builds on the excellent work of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council and Task Forces over the past six years. Each year, the council has worked to identify, study, and recommend action steps in all areas of university life from student affairs, academic affairs, staff, facilities, the surrounding community and beyond.

Initially under the leadership of Dr. Pamela Fox, and most recently the leadership of Dr. Carolyn Haynes, the Coordinating Council has documented and assessed the progress of First in 2009, clearly demonstrating the breadth and depth of its initiatives and the significant contributions of so many of Miami's students, staff, faculty and administrators. These reports are available at <http://www.units.muohio.edu/firstin2009/index.html>.

In reviewing the achievements of First in 2009, we find that two core themes consistently emerge: Academic Excellence and Institutional Transformation:

- Academic excellence is embodied in the many initiatives that have worked to improve both graduate and undergraduate programs, including for example the work of task forces on the Graduate School, Diversity, International Education, Academic Integrity, Liberal Education, and Interdisciplinarity, all of which emphasize a rich intellectual and cultural life for the students, faculty and staff of Miami University.
- Institutional Transformation has been a strong thread in the work of task forces on Leadership, Governance, Regional Campuses, and Continuing Education (among others); this work incorporates a self-reflective look at how we do business and how we can do it better.

The work of these task forces has functioned as a series of strategic plans for specific units, work that is in many cases ongoing, and has been infused into daily practice across the university.

It is the work of the current Coordinating Council to shift focus to a macro view of future themes that might guide the University into a new dialogue. We readily acknowledge that this is only possible through the accomplishments and on-going recommendations of the past. In essence, the efforts of First in 2009 have brought us to this place. With the benefit of all the work of previous councils, we are able to take the longer view.

Through a process of reviewing all existing reports and recommendations, dialogue with the provost and president, numerous meetings, and a day-long retreat, we have

synthesized a framework for a dialogue about Miami's future. A single phrase captures the essence of our vision for the future: The Engaged University.

The Engaged University

We have conceptualized "The Engaged University" as having three fundamental components. First and foremost, the engaged public university must be accessible to all citizens of Ohio, and this form of engagement is clearly a key component of President Hodge's vision for the future. Second, the engaged university thinks deeply and creatively about how students and faculty are engaged in scholarly, creative, and intellectual pursuits on campus, both inside and outside formal classroom/laboratory settings. And finally, the engaged university envisions connections to both local and global communities that are embodied in meaningful relationships of working together to improve the common good.

Accessibility

Miami University must demonstrate to the public that we are working to provide an affordable quality education, accessible to all deserving students, regardless of family income. The diversity of the university community, reflective of the society and world at large, is imperative as a foundation to higher education. We should strive to keep Miami accessible to all racial and economic groups regardless of whether they attended a wealthy or a poor K-12 school. In this vein, it is highly advisable to reach potential students in their early educational years in order to establish an educationally enhanced, encouraging, and guiding relationship leading them to an excellent higher education at Miami University. Similarly, at the graduate level, we need to ensure that our excellent graduate programs remain a viable option for people from all economic backgrounds.

Each of our campuses, and all programs both graduate and undergraduate, has an important role to play in this endeavor. We remain uniquely poised as a university to provide access to students locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. For example, the Regional Campuses extend access to Miami University geographically, financially, and developmentally. Currently, our presence at VOA (Voice of America) will provide access to both undergraduate and graduate students who are geographically separated from our three campuses; specifically undergraduates seeking to raise their nursing credentials from an associate's to a bachelor's degree and those seeking an M.Ed., or M.B.A. Another example is the TEAM scholarship, which provides access to graduate level professional development coursework for Ohio's K-12 teachers and administrators. Beginning in the fall of 2007, faculty from across divisions will participate in a coaching program designed to help students from lower income families successfully make the transition to the university experience at Miami. Programs such as these are critical to our ability to make accessibility an ongoing priority for each of our campuses. Given the breadth and depth of research our faculty are engaged in, we are also uniquely positioned to provide students access to research opportunities that promote the teacher/scholar and student/scholar models.

Recommended Goals:

- **Successfully implement the Access Initiative and assess the impact of the coaching program.**
- **Become a meaningful contributor to the Ohio Strive initiative and support the work of local OCAN (the Ohio College Access Network) organizations in their efforts to promote college access and success.**
- **Develop measurable goals concerning financial support for undergraduate, graduate, and international students.**
- **Provide ample opportunities for engagement that are focused on making meaningful learning connections and service to our communities.**
- **Assess the effectiveness of all existing Bridge Programs and develop Best Practices for each of these programs.**
- **Continue to implement recommendations of the Relocation Committee.**
- **Ensure that assessment for all programs designed to enhance accessibility and student success is in place to ensure student retention.**

Engagement on Campus

Engagement on campus has many facets. The Lumina Report¹ defines student engagement in part, in three modalities and we find their breakdown helpful: Time spent in pursuits of the mind, time spent in meaningful co-curricular activities (educationally purposeful activities), and effective instructional practice (including an emphasis on academic engagement and critical thinking) that leads to application. The engagement construct intersects nicely with our espoused mission, thus engagement should help define our future institutional direction and be a driving force as Miami moves forward.

Miami University is known for and prides itself on presenting our undergraduate students with a high quality liberal arts education that is predicated on four foundational components: thinking critically, understanding contexts, engaging with other learners, and reflecting and acting. Additionally, we pride ourselves on graduate education that integrates depth of content and scholarly/creative activity that deepens our understanding of the world. At the core of this understanding is the ability to not only think critically but ethically. We challenge our students to lead lives of integrity, and become citizens with a global perspective. In order to prepare our students to be engaged global citizens our academic curriculum must be a dynamic curriculum. Rapid advances in technology and globalization require a living/changing curriculum that has the ability to respond to the ever-changing world yet remains true to our liberal arts foundation. Only with a dynamic curriculum can we present our graduate and undergraduate students with the best educational experience possible.

The ways students acquire, process, and utilize information continues to evolve. In a progressively growing and changing information environment, Miami must take measures to equip all entering students with a core set of competencies in information literacy upon which they can build as they progress through the curriculum and beyond.

Moreover, we must anticipate the need to guide our students as they complete advanced courses, so that they acquire the discipline-specific knowledge and skills (e.g., citation guidelines, research tools, and methodological approaches) needed to excel in their work. We must continue to pursue the creation of new knowledge through a commitment to research and scholarship while simultaneously paying attention to the ways in which new knowledge is transmitted and applied.

As such, faculty must keep abreast of changes not only in their discipline, but also in the most current pedagogical strategies and delivery options for engaging students in transformative learning. No longer are students content to only sit inside a four-walled classroom and be lectured to by a professor. For example, today's students are challenged and motivated by alternative pedagogies such as experiential learning, the inverted classroom, hybrid or even online courses, and the inverted curriculum. Students who attend any campus of Miami University expect and should be given a learning environment that has a curriculum that responds to the rapidly changing environment in which we all live. Because no "one size" will fit all situations, it is the awareness, flexibility and openness of the faculty that, combined with their passion for their disciplines, will keep the University moving forward into a future that may hold unexpected learning opportunities for all stakeholders.

We know from past assessments that Miami students fare well in some aspects of engagement and not so well in others. For example, our students are engaged in the local community far beyond our peer institutions; they also report very high levels of participation in co-curricular activities (NSSE). Miami's infrastructure for innovative teaching practice is well known across the country (e.g., Alumni Teaching Scholars), and our students are engaged with faculty in research and one-on-one study at a rate that exceeds the national average. Our students also regularly engage with faculty outside of class (CSS). On the other hand, Miami students report a lower than average amount of time spent preparing for class, report feeling bored in class at least occasionally, and admit to turning in sub par work at times (NSSE & YFCY).ⁱⁱ Center for Academic Integrity research also informs us that college students need more education on issues of integrity. In addition, our global outreach, while comparable to some peer institutions, needs to expand in order to offer our students the kind of education that will prepare them for living in the global community of the twenty-first century.

We believe Miami's future will be defined by an enhanced notion of student engagement, with a focus on the fusion of learning. This fusion of learning is ripe with vibrant intellectual interactions where inquiry leads to rich exchanges (in and out of the classroom and laboratory) between all learners (graduate students, undergraduate students, faculty and staff). This might include a stronger emphasis on co-curricular activities that are connected to the educational mission of the university. Some examples of Miami's current best practices in this area include living learning communities, lectures, community engagement, Undergraduate Summer Scholars, University Honors, and international initiatives. Our students will co-construct knowledge – they will be active learners who work toward contextualized understanding of real world problems and innovative solutions. Knowledge is not as meaningful to students unless they are

challenged to construct and make meaning of it, and to use their newfound capacity for the betterment of all with an emphasis on personal and academic responsibility to society and our global community.ⁱⁱⁱ

Miami's climate for learning already provides a strong foundation in all of these areas of engagement. It is now time to go to the next level and challenge our students more deeply.

Recommended Goals:

- **Identify and promote opportunities for the fusion of learning that are specific to fields of study and research, but that also promote interdisciplinary and co-curricular connections.**
- **Enhance opportunities such as Undergraduate Research Mentorships, Undergraduate Summer Scholars, Truman, Goldwater, Marshall scholarships, and Fulbright opportunities, which promote the student-scholar model.**
- **Continue to engage disciplinary stakeholders in dialogues about the modes of thought and practice that differentiate our disciplines to develop best practices for achieving quality that are specific to the disciplines but vital to the university.**
- **Successfully transform the top 25+ courses.**
- **Enhance engagement (and thus increase graduation rates) among members of at-risk groups.**
- **Continue to make measurable contributions that enhance both local and global communities.**
- **Continue to develop and support opportunities for faculty to explore new pedagogies.**
- **Serve as an institution with a clear and measurable legacy of positive impact.**
- **Emphasize the assessment of effective learning and teaching in meaningful ways that account for all academic disciplines.**

Engagement with the Community and the World

As a public institution, we have a responsibility to contribute to the public good. Our mission asserts that “Miami is committed to serve the community, the state and nation,” and, we would add, the global community. Indeed, it is no longer possible to think of Miami or of ourselves strictly in “local” terms given the extraordinarily varied connections of this new century. Today, more than in any other period in human history, the process of global interconnectedness thrusts daily events taking place near and far directly into our lives and into the lives of peoples and societies worldwide. The rising acceleration and meshing of global trade, communications, travel, ideas—even diseases—now force us to rethink and redefine how we will live together.

We believe that increasing our connections to the local and global communities is critical to Miami's institutional capacity to stay abreast of current issues and trends, to conduct

basic and applied research, to create effective professional practice, and to influence and transform public policy. These connections are especially important to faculty and students in the professional schools (which constitute 50% of our students and faculty) who seek to integrate a liberal education with an exemplary professional preparation. Yet, we would argue these local and global connections are also of rapidly increasing importance to subject areas in the liberal arts, humanities, fine arts, sciences and social sciences which research the historical, social, political, cultural and economic contexts within which we live and work today.

Fortunately, Miami University has a strong tradition of local and global connections upon which to build, from our regional campuses to our study abroad programs, from the Talawanda-Miami Partnership to the Center for Community Engagement in Over-the-Rhine, and from the MUM/MUH Business and Technology centers, the Office of Service Learning and Community Engagement, the Scripps Gerontology Center, to the Voice of America Learning Center and our Center for American and World Cultures, along with Project Dragonfly, the Center for Social Entrepreneurship, and the Teaching American History Project. Indeed, in the recent North Central Accreditation report, Miami was lauded for its deep levels of community engagement.

Recently, the Cincinnati *Enquirer*^{iv} published an article on the burgeoning interest of urban universities in community renewal and development. This article framed such civic engagement as a cutting-edge trend, calling it “one of the hottest models now among urban universities.” We believe that an important national leadership role for Miami University would be to transform this civic and global engagement trend into one that applies to all universities, regardless of geographic location. Indeed, given our strong history of community connections, and our passionate and academically ambitious students, Miami is clearly poised to take leadership here. A renewed emphasis on the University’s role in building community strengths, and giving back to our constituents locally and globally in terms of knowledge production, new technologies, best practices, the creative arts, and improved outcomes for children, families and communities, would make a compelling vision for Miami’s future.

Miami University does face challenges in the arena of fostering a deeper level of engagement with our many communities (from the townships that surround the university to the state of Ohio and beyond). First and foremost, we need to think more deeply about how to frame community engagement and field-based research and teaching as integral components of faculty work. Such work goes well beyond the traditional label of “service” and opens the possibility of rethinking the very role of faculty and staff toward more integrated models of “connected teacher-scholars.” Second, we must work harder to inform Miami’s stakeholders of the work that we are engaged in to improve educational systems, bring the arts to a wide variety of communities, improve understanding of family interaction and needs, and create solutions to local, state, and global problems. This need is particularly important within the state of Ohio, for unfortunately all too often Miami is misperceived as a university that is isolated and disconnected. Third, we must work harder to ensure that our university community is open and welcoming to all who come to learn together, from our traditional-age residential students to those who bring

cultural, global, life experience and other wealth of knowledge to our campus. Vigorous engagement with the local and global communities is the path of Miami's renewal and further development.

Recommended Goals:

- **Identify and address the challenges we face at fostering deeper engagement with our communities, particularly from the townships and surrounding area.**
- **Strengthen existing support for areas and disciplines where community engagement and field-based research are critical as well as potentially new areas of opportunity. Enlist leaders from those areas in establishing goals and priorities.**
- **Engage with State initiatives such as STEM 2, the Innovation Incentive, and the Energy Initiative.**
- **Establish multidisciplinary discussion groups on civic and global engagement. Identify specific disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary opportunities that might be unique to Miami University.**
- **Ensure that every Miami graduate, including our international students, will have a meaningful global experience, whether at home or abroad, including the opportunity to study a new language and culture.**
- **Infuse diversity, international and domestic, across the curriculum by implementing the recommendations of the Provost's committee on diversity and the curriculum.**
- **Increase participation in service learning, co-op, and other community based learning opportunities.**
- **Expand our emphasis on experiences that entail deep explorations of character and ethical behavior.**

Conclusion

The committee looks forward to discussion of this report and our recommended goals for the future. We submit this report in appreciation of all that was accomplished by First in 2009 and in anticipation of community-wide dialogue concerning Miami's future.

Respectfully submitted,

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ⁱ Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., Gonyea, R.M. (2006). Connecting the Dots: Multi-faceted analyses of the relationship between student engagement results from the NSSE, and the Institutional Practices and conditions that foster students success. Lumina foundation for Education Grant #2518, September 1, 2006.

ⁱⁱ NSSE-National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana, 2003; CSS-Collegiate Senior Survey, UCLA, 2003; YFCY-your First College Year, UCLA, 2004

ⁱⁱⁱ King, P. M.; Baxter Magolda, M. B (1999). A Developmental Perspective on Learning.
Journal of College Student Development v40 n5 p599-609.

^{iv} Peale, C. (2007). *Thanks to UC, things lookin' up in Uptown.* Cincinnati *Enquirer*, February 4, p J1.