

Becoming Great: The University's Vision and Goals Revisited

An Interim Report of Progress and Achievements

June 2001-December 2004

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January 2005

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Introduction

In June 2001, the University of Denver formally adopted the Vision, Values, Mission, and Goals that were created by the University Planning Advisory Council (UPAC) with substantial input from the campus community. Now, three and a half years later, a special task force convened by the Provost, has reviewed progress reports from task forces for each goal to prepare this interim report of progress and achievements. These goal reports included extensive progress information from the academic and service units of the University. The Provost charged us to reflect on the progress and synthesize reports of what has happened to date. We set out to hold up a mirror for the University community and answer some key questions:

- *Where are we in relation to our goals of 2001?*
- *What has happened?*
- *Are there measurable outcomes?*
- *What have we learned?*
- *What should happen next?*
- *Are there opportunities or challenges to anticipate?*
- *Are we becoming the great private University that we envisioned?*

In January 2005, we assert that the University clearly is in motion, moving toward actualizing its vision and achieving its goals, and heading toward greatness. Though it is too early to judge the results of some investments, there are many signs of progress in each goal area. We see changes in the institution's capacity in critical areas relating to the vision and goals. Investments have been made, new structures and positions put in place, and new policies and budgeting decisions enacted. We also see many significant activities underway in each goal area. Though activity is not a guarantee of outcomes, clearly much is happening on campus now in support of the University vision and goals. And, finally, some results are beginning to be evident.

What vision was articulated in 2001?

The University of Denver will be a great private university dedicated to the public good. Our students will enjoy an extraordinary education. Our search for knowledge will be daring. Our community will be diverse and dynamic.

An effective vision stretches an organization, inspires it toward a preferred future, and mobilizes the hearts and minds of its community. Our vision of greatness, with its compelling language, has served those purposes.

Change happens in institutions in many ways, sometimes as the result of explicitly planned actions and at other times as the result of changing circumstances, opportunities captured, and actions intuitively undertaken. How does a diverse community such as ours find a desired future and move itself toward its particular definition of greatness? People may ask, “Is progress the result of the UPAC process or have things happened for other reasons?” “Weren’t these things already in process?” They will wonder if further or deeper planning would have led to more specific results. They will ask if people really buy in or know what UPAC is or what it did. We believe that the UPAC process was an effective and valuable approach that fostered change in direct and indirect ways.

The UPAC process provided guiding concepts, giving language to what we want to become, and creating a context for choices and actions. The process itself has been an extended conversation among University leaders whose roles and perspectives were diverse. The creation and articulation of a common vision, and the adoption and communication of that vision by the University’s senior leadership, have been powerful tools for accelerating the pace of change in a dynamic organization already embarked on transformational change. The UPAC process provided a tool that fit the culture of DU, took advantage of the leadership style of its senior administration, and maximized progress already underway. This increased the momentum for change, and captured opportunities that were uniquely possible at this time in the life of the institution.

What aspects of the UPAC process seem to have worked well?

- A committed and diverse group of people, who were leaders on campus in whatever roles they held, participated in the process.
- The written documents were eloquent and inspiring.
- The Board, Chancellor, and senior administrators adopted the Vision, Values, Mission and Goals (VVMG) and publicly supported and expressed the concepts.
- Varied tools communicated the VVMG to the University community.
- The Provost and his office played a critical role as a connecting point in driving the goals.
- A Task Force structure provided champions and recommended actions for each goal.
- UPAC selected goals to highlight each year, giving focus and priority.
- Sufficient buy-in and understanding of the University community created movement in the desired direction on many simultaneous fronts.

- Several goal-related institutional initiatives now are budgeted formally.
- New opportunities were seized and shaped to support specific goal areas.

UPAC did not begin in a vacuum. The University already was embarked on a journey of transformative change. UPAC probably accelerated and widened the commitment to key initiatives. As an advisory process, UPAC did not have formal authority to drive the changes. We do not believe that an authoritarian process would, in fact, have worked in our culture. UPAC never completed a full planning process of stating specific measurable objectives for each goal, providing instead only some illustrative measurable outcomes. We believe this actually was a benefit, as it allowed units in our decentralized and diverse community to define and actualize goals in ways appropriate to their missions, constituencies, and circumstances. An Integration Task Force, intended to create super-ordinate structures and processes for integration of the plans and actions, never really completed its work in a formal way, due to the changing roles of its participants, but its discussions about how to keep the process moving forward influenced the next few years of UPAC activity. Reports by Deans and Directors each year also served to keep their leadership attention focused on the goals.

What are the indications of progress?

After extensive review of the reports of each of the goal task forces, as well as other documents such as Profiles and the annual Provost Report, we discussed the reports, looked for other confirming information, and synthesized our impressions about activities undertaken or expanded since 2001. We found evidence of progress in each of the four theme areas of our vision of a great private university:

Dedicated to the public good
Extraordinary education
Daring search for knowledge
Diverse and dynamic community

In the following pages, we will highlight selected examples of progress in actualizing the critical elements of the vision. Many more examples appear in the goal and unit reports.

- ***The University increasingly is showing its dedication to the public good.***

DU faculty, staff, and administration have created a host of ways for DU's programs to benefit the public good. Time and time again, across the university, efforts are turned outward to benefit not only enrolled students and members of the DU community, but the general public. In this category of public good efforts are many academic programs that include a community service or engagement purpose, from the College of Education's Ritchie Principal Preparation Leadership Program and Americorps program (placing teachers in inner city and underserved locations), to the Four Corners program in the Graduate School of Social Work (providing social work practitioners to that underserved geographic area),

and the Community Health program in the Student Health Center. A proposed new Law & Society program in the Women's College is designed to create academic and career opportunities for Women's College students while also benefiting the public by placing students and graduates in community and public sector organizations. The Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement boasts a total of almost 70 faculty and 450 students involved in service projects related to coursework during the 03-04 academic year, up from 14 faculty and less than 300 students two years earlier.

In addition, the University extended to the general public new opportunities for learning and discussion, encouraging the democratic process through public programming on topics of current interest and debate. In its first year, attendance at the 18 Bridges to the Future events topped 25,000, with half of that number occurring at two major events. University College deepened the discussion, offering a public curriculum, free of charge, which drew an attendance of more than 1000 during the 2003 winter and spring quarters. The public curriculum evolved into a new University College fee-based Enrichment Program with an enrollment of almost 1500 community learners served over the two years since its initiation.

The Denver metro area is being transformed into a campus-town with the University of Denver being Denver's campus. Public programming such as art exhibitions in the Myhren Gallery, musical performances in the Newman Center and athletic and recreation events at the Ritchie Center draw the community to DU, enlightening and stimulating those who attend.

In recent years, the University developed new partnerships in the city, state, and region. The Land Use Master Plan, done in partnership with neighbors and the City of Denver, and the University Business Association are two examples. New programs of communication and service reach out to the immediate neighborhood's residents. Partnerships with public-good purposes are found throughout DU, from the Women's College Chamber's Center, housing several women's organizations, to the Collaborative Digitization Program in the Penrose Library that provides digitization support for libraries, museums, historical societies and archives in the west.

The University of Denver applies its expertise, networks, and skills to tough problems, working for public improvement. The new Colorado Economic Futures Panel is designed to yield breakthrough recommendations on Colorado's economy, while the Homeland Security Center and the Privacy Institute address policy and process concerns that affect national well-being.

Finally, at DU, concern with the public good and with encouragement of ethical citizenry permeates much of what we do as individuals. Although DU, as a private university, carries no mandate to follow the requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, the Board of Trustees instituted new policies on handling conflict of interest and ethics-based financial practices that extend deep into the organization. Individual concern with ethical behavior combines with programs that analyze ethics in business, law, and government. The Center for Civic Ethics is a prominent example of our increased capacity to focus attention on ethics as we pursue the betterment of society through practice and theory.

- *Our students are enjoying an extraordinary education.*

A renewed emphasis on learning and teaching characterizes the current institutional context. Every academic unit on campus conducts program outcomes assessment to improve the curriculum and thus students' experiences. Careful design and use of state-of-the-art technology in our newest facilities, the Newman Center, the Ricketson Law Building, and the Chambers Center, support learning. Enhanced digital resources accessed through Penrose Library and across campus using mobile wireless technology and smart classrooms contribute to students' ability to find and effectively use information.

The Hyde Interview establishes certain expectations about the character of the DU community and the rigor of the academic environment. The interview process likely facilitated a statistically significant increase in average SAT scores between 2001 and 2004, along with greater numbers of matriculating Chancellor Scholars and Boettcher Scholars. Institutional funding continues to support Division I scholar-athletes' opportunities to excel at both high caliber varsity competition and high quality academic experiences. New funding enhances the Honors Program by inviting preeminent visiting scholars to campus. New mechanisms stimulate and support the development of joint and dual degrees so students' various educational experiences may be more fully integrated. In addition, renewed emphasis on ethics led to a Top 5 for Ethics ranking by the Wall Street Journal for the Daniels College of Business and facilitated the development of new educational modules delivered by the Community Citizenship and Standards office. The Sturm College of Law TeachTech faculty group initiated programs to de-mystify the law school learning process. The Women's College developed a proposal for a truly interdisciplinary major in Law and Society as well as a complete revision of its approach to teaching mathematics.

Two major new programs for undergraduates also contribute to the exceptional education that students receive at DU. In fall 2004, the first students to study abroad under the Cherrington Global Scholars program did so in record numbers. There were 353 juniors and seniors studying at 62 sites in 26 countries, many in the language of the host country. As they return to campus, these students will be queried about their experiences so that program improvements can be put in place. In addition, these students have the opportunity to earn a language certificate if they complete a series of courses and rigorous assessments.

The generous gift from Tom and Cydney Marsico for the enhancement of undergraduate arts and sciences education is an example of an opportunity unforeseen in June 2001 that enabled progress toward the vision of an extraordinary education for our undergraduate students. The Marsico Initiative already has generated over 30 funded pilot projects to date and has stimulated faculty support for a substantial new writing initiative. Included in the list of pilot projects is the renovation of the new student orientation program into the Discoveries week with Dialogues and Destinations programs that provide opportunities for first-year students to work closely with their academic mentors in small group settings. The pilot projects focus on academic depth and intensity, experiential learning and close faculty contact in order to enhance the overall intellectual climate at DU.

An essential component of most of the extraordinary-education initiatives is support for the faculty who design and implement them. This support has come through external gifts and grants as well as internal operating budget allocations. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) continues to grant funds on a competitive basis for faculty teams and proposals that promise educational innovations. Some highlights of recently funded projects include “Innovative Teaching-Laptop Computers and Spectroscopy;” “Sweet Chariot: The Story of the Spirituals;” and “Case Study Learning for Global Health Affairs.” In addition, the CTL sponsored a conference on cooperative learning last spring, which was followed by a series of workshops attended by a dedicated cohort of faculty from across the university whose preliminary reports describe impressive development of more active and collaborative learning experiences. Students and faculty use technology more and more to enhance learning in classroom settings and to facilitate student interaction outside of class. There are more than 800 course containers in BlackBoard. Penrose Library offers an information literacy-learning module to all first-year students.

This impressive array of initiatives designed to facilitate students’ extraordinary education at DU is a tribute to the collective efforts of many faculty and staff at the university.

- *New and expanded initiatives support our more daring search for knowledge.*

The search for new knowledge increasingly is fundamental to the experience of students and faculty at DU. Among our undergraduates, the Partners in Scholarship Program (PINS) awards mini-grants to student-faculty mentoring partnerships supporting research within a variety of academic disciplines. Recent projects range from precision photometry of stars, to an examination of the Sand Creek massacre, to the impact of pesticides on wetlands. The Marsico Initiative expanded PINS funding recently to create even greater research opportunities for the University’s undergraduates. In the 01-02 academic year, 49 PINS projects were funded, while in the most recent two years PINS sponsored between 90 and 100 projects each year.

Among our graduate students the search for knowledge is the very essence of their education. Most of our master degree programs and all of our doctoral degree programs require students to complete a major piece of independent research and write about that work in a thesis, dissertation, or doctoral paper. To enhance the efforts of these students, the University recently increased its annual investment by \$300,000 to raise graduate assistant stipends and \$360,000 to provide health insurance for graduate teaching and research assistants.

In the pursuit of knowledge, many of our faculty at DU seek and obtain external funds to support their research and other activities. Last year DU faculty received over \$21 million from governmental and private sources to support their scholarship. Some of the exciting areas of research are focused on rapid prototyping of digital and biosensor systems; modeling and simulation of digital optical networks; the mechanics of materials, fatigue, and fracture mechanics; pharmaceutical processing; nondestructive evaluation and high-tech materials; development of a remote sensing device to monitor automobile exhaust emissions; research on nanotechnology; improving the public response to natural disasters such as tornadoes; efforts to improve interpersonal relationships and family functioning; and reducing substance abuse in a variety of settings. An exciting development is the acquisition of the Eleanor

Roosevelt Institute (ERI) by DU, another unexpected opportunity that moved us closer to the University's vision. As its mission, ERI seeks an in-depth understanding of the process of life, especially human life, and through this understanding, works toward unlocking the mysteries of human health and disease. Ground-breaking research at ERI includes an examination of the cognitive and behavioral disabilities faced by persons with Down syndrome; development of a mouse model of autism that will allow the observation of mutations in a gene encoding that may lead to autism; investigation into a methodology that may lead to the prevention of cancer and other genetic diseases; and understanding the link between obesity and diabetes. The addition of ERI greatly expanded our capabilities in the biological sciences. We expect that synergy between DU faculty and ERI will produce exciting discoveries in the future, contributing both to our search for knowledge and our dedication to the public good.

To support all of these efforts the University has made much progress in building its research infrastructure. For example, a portion (21%) of recovered indirect costs generated by externally funded scholarship is returned to academic units across the University. This provided about \$824,000 for FY04 and \$898,000 for FY05 to academic units for a variety of purposes, including start-up funding for faculty research labs, equipment, and other research-related expenses. In addition, the Provost established the Professional Research Opportunities for Faculty (PROF) fund in 2004. Funded at \$200,000 for FY05, it provides grants up to \$15,000 to faculty to increase scholarly activity. This fund supplements the already-established Faculty Research Fund (FRF) that typically provides faculty grants of up to \$2,500 from a total yearly fund of \$45,000. Another \$50,000 was budgeted to support faculty scholarship in performing and studio arts. In Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Marsico Initiative has piloted \$195,000 to fund scholars' visits to the University for the current academic year.

Overall the University has made considerable progress in its goal to reinforce a strong University-wide culture of research and scholarship, committing substantial resources to enhance faculty and student research, scholarship, and creative opportunities.

- ***Our community is more diverse and dynamic.***

Community requires a sense of identity, togetherness and culture in support of our mission. To be both diverse and dynamic, a community must include a diverse group of people actively participating in varied events and activities that contribute to our collective campus culture. Over the last three and half years, DU has experienced several examples of increased community that support our intended practices of ethical behavior, globalization, ethnic diversity, strong enrollments, and competitive athletic programs.

Examples of community enhancement can be identified across the campus but special responsibility for creating engaged communities of scholars is vested in our Campus Life Division. There a strong five-year strategic plan has been developed to help strengthen campus community. Major reorganization has occurred to bring a cohesive array of programs, services, and support systems for our entire campus.

We have advanced our experience of community by providing strong internal communication. The technology infrastructure of our campus through the use of webCentral provides a common tool for accessing DU resources and offers a common place for making events known to the entire campus. Our campus newspaper, *The Source*, has become a great tool for sharing information across all aspects of the campus. The student newspaper, *The Clarion*, provides relevant news to students, faculty, and staff. The *University of Denver Magazine* is an effective tool for taking internal news and groundbreaking innovations to our alumni and external communities.

The Provost's Luncheon series contributes to intellectual community. These luncheons are always fully subscribed at 300 with a waiting list for each luncheon. The Newman Center brings the campus community together and showcases the talents of our students, faculty, and staff. As a venue for national and international performers, it serves as a magnet, drawing the campus and external communities together, and adding to the opportunities for participation provided by the Ritchie Center and its programs.

Faculty, staff, and alumni participate extensively in the Hyde Interview, demonstrating a new way of creating community. During the interview process, by discussing participation, service, community, and individuality with prospective students, we frame their expectations about their experience at DU.

A diverse community is a priority in recruiting, hiring, and retaining excellent faculty, staff, and students. Targeted efforts by the new Center for Multicultural Excellence to attract candidates of color for faculty and staff positions have created heightened awareness and sensitivity. In the 14 months since the appointment of an Assistant Provost for Multicultural Faculty Recruitment and Retention, a national network of over 135 faculty and administrators and 55 doctoral candidates has developed. The Assistant Provost assisted 28 search committees and recruited 15 applicants for staff, faculty, and administrator positions. He was involved directly or indirectly with the hiring of nine minority individuals in Law, Education, Women's College, History, Spanish, Center for Multicultural Excellence, Arts and Humanities (Languages), Business, and the Ricks Center.

At the student level, new efforts in compliance with SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) make DU more diverse. In a new program, Community of Excellence Scholars, undergraduate minority scholars are paired with DU faculty or staff for a yearlong coaching experience.

All of these new initiatives promise to assist DU in addressing a key university goal "to increase substantially the presence of members of under-represented domestic ethnic populations," and to become a more diverse and dynamic community.

Observations and recommendations

The past 3 1/2 years brought significant progress in the areas identified in UPAC's statements of vision and goals. Much good work is underway. The goal reports identify many more examples than we have summarized in this report. Attached to this report is a chart showing many examples pulled out from the goal reports and organized by the themes in the vision report to which they relate. Our vision of a great private university is on its way to reality, if we can stay the course and sustain institutional focus in the next years.

Because we believe that the attention and intention of the University's senior leadership has been a critical factor in the progress toward our UPAC goals, sustaining that leadership through anticipated and unexpected transitions will be critical. A ten-year commitment to Vision, Values, Mission, and Goals requires sustained focus and renewal through changes of leadership and turnover of faculty and staff. Clearly on our mind is the transition of the Chancellor from his current role to that of Chair of the Board of Trustees and the recruitment and selection of a new Chancellor. Significant too is the appointment of a new Dean for the Daniels College who also will be new to the DU community. Critical senior positions have turned over in recent years, including the provost, several deans and vice-chancellors. Other senior leadership positions may experience turnover in the next years as well. It will be difficult to sustain institutional memory and intentionality as we move further out in time from the establishment of the University vision and goals. This will require active efforts to keep talking about our vision, values, mission and goals through these transitions, to engage new leaders in our efforts, and to respond to their new energy and ideas with renewed purpose and effort. The Board of Trustees can play a major role in encouraging our continued commitment to the course all of us have set.

Interestingly, we also looked at data regarding the age of the faculty of the University and found that 40% (ahead of the national average for colleges and universities) are now at age 55 or older, signaling changes as individuals reach retirement and new faculty are recruited. Clearly this represents a challenge as both institutional memory and individual talents are lost. It also can be an opportunity if we stay focused on the vision and goals and recruit individuals who can further our progress in crucial goal areas

Our review of the objectives prepared by the Sustainability Task Force in 2002 revealed several areas of progress that are noteworthy, especially in improved compensation, national reputation, and resource allocation. The new multi-year modeling tool also provides an improvement in planning and projecting for financial sustainability.

There is not yet an announced plan for a significant expansion of our endowment, though initial conversations about such an endeavor seem quite promising. We believe that a greatly expanded endowment is a leveraging objective—one that will facilitate progress in all the other goal areas and move us much closer to greatness.

We also noted the sustainability objective to expand institutional capacity for data collection, analysis, and decision support. In preparing this report, we were not easily able to gather

data to answer questions and measure progress. We urge UPAC to discuss this particular unmet objective and evaluate its potential for supporting our forward movement toward the vision and goals.

We highlight the following suggestions for accelerating progress toward the goals:

1. UPAC needs to be used to its fullest capacity. This report may provide the focus for a discussion of progress and renewed commitment, especially in areas where we have not seen as much progress or where goals have not been emphasized.
2. Continue the UPAC structure but reinvigorate it with renewed participation, assignments and energy, perhaps through a mid-point retreat, “Renewing the Vision” in 2006, the half-way point in the 10-year planning timeframe.
3. Develop/expand an institution-wide infrastructure to support systematic long-term planning. The infrastructure should build upon current institutional research and assessment programs and allow for subsequent institutional analyses, strategic planning, assessment, and evaluation.
4. Continue the focus on ethnic diversity in order to maximize measurable results in this area, building on the investments and efforts made so far
5. Support and encourage a broader range of types of research and scholarly activity beyond the traditional modes, --i.e., public good scholarship, scholarship of teaching and learning.
6. Provide additional support for and focus on an extraordinary graduate educational experience. Much of the progress during this time has been in undergraduate education, yet much potential for growth and enhancement of learning exists in graduate programs. Several options for supporting growth at the graduate level need to be explored, including greater support for institutional marketing of programs or clusters of programs, and pricing strategies. A UPAC task force specially created to explore opportunities for stimulating enrollment and developing innovative teaching and learning approaches would be a good process step.
7. Maximize the investment and opportunity inherent in the branding initiative to bring greater shared meaning to the “uni” part of university and to further a sense of institutional identity and community.
8. Continue to look for ways to increase institutional capacity to meet the goals, through appropriate centralized structures, positions and base budget commitments.
9. Communicate and celebrate the progress toward achieving the vision and goals frequently, as a way to reinforce the activities of the units and shape new opportunities.

In summary, this task force is proud of the accomplishments of the University and sees substantial progress toward the University’s goals and the realization of its vision of greatness.