

A VISION IN THE MAKING

These first months at CWRU have been thrilling. It is a joy to learn more each week about the remarkable assets the University brings to the task of planning its future: wonderful students, faculty, staff, and alumni; many outstanding academic programs; fantastic administrative leadership; dedicated trustees; and a unique location in University Circle.

What has impressed me most is the University's enthusiasm for raising our performance to an entirely new and higher level, one that will distinguish us among great institutions. With an optimism reflected in the October dedication of our incredible new Peter B. Lewis Building, the campus has been buzzing with new aspirations, from the Board of Trustees' adoption of new governance reforms to the passion of the students in the freshman seminar I co-teach—my highlight of every week!

We need to transform all this wonderful energy into action. In an address to the campus this fall, I suggested six elements of a University vision. We're discussing these suggestions on campus and with off-campus groups as well, and I expect to present the finished product—*our* vision, not my vision—in January. Let me summarize these themes, which are already undergoing change with input from many people:

First, becoming the world's most powerful learning environment. I believe we can challenge ourselves to create a culture of mentoring so strong that not only students but also faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and even visitors to campus become passionate about moving beyond themselves to advance knowledge and improve humanity. I link this item to the wonderful traditions we celebrate here in creating synergy among our research, education, and service missions.

Second, transforming knowledge itself and all learners (including our students). This is about an educational philosophy centering on transformation of learners, of teachers, of knowledge itself, and ultimately of society. We see possibilities for a uniquely transforming environment not limited to the University's own campus, but one which includes partnerships with many other great cultural institutions, hospitals, businesses, and other agencies in University Circle, Greater Cleveland, and beyond.

Third, creating the most productive partnerships. Universities have not traditionally enjoyed great reputations as partners. How might we distinguish ourselves in this regard and achieve things that other universities can't—but we could—if we were the best university at forming productive partnerships with other great institutions? Are there new opportunities to be pursued?


Fourth, acting in ways consistent with our core academic values. We need to articulate clearly the values we hold most dear, and then practice these values across every level of the

University. If we espouse values of quality and excellence, then we have to seek world-class students, faculty, and staff, and promote and reward those who excel. If we value leadership and innovation, then we have to recruit faculty who are leaders in exploring new frontiers of knowledge, and selectively allocate resources into programs

where we can establish global leadership. If we value diversity, and we do, then we should recruit faculty, students, and staff who represent a wide variety of cultural and intellectual experiences, and provide a broad range of opportunities in an atmosphere of tolerance and sensitivity.

Fifth, maximizing efficiencies for optimum productivity. How might we become the most efficiently run research university in the world? I believe that if we could use leading edge technologies to annihilate all unnecessary bureaucracy, then our faculty, students, and staff could maintain a focus on what they do best, and our scholarly productivity would set a new standard in higher education. If we could offer the world's best academics a unique opportunity for unimpeded scholarship—even when that scholarship crosses departmental, school, or institutional boundaries, the very intersections where so much current scholarship is found—we could compete for the best talent against any university in the world.

Finally, leading in liberal learning among research universities. It is a national tragedy that college applicants feel compelled to choose between a great liberal education and pursuit of a degree from a great research university. Where better to get a liberal education than from research faculty who personify curiosity and disciplined thinking—the cornerstones of a liberal education? Can CWRU aspire to lead the nation as the research university where the challenges of creating new knowledge support the values of a liberal education, where rigorous theory and practical experiences come together?

The way to achieve the future we want involves decisive action based on clear priorities that are widely shared on the campus and among our constituencies, and I invite your comments on these themes for a University vision. We need your continued participation to help shape the vision and to make the vision become reality over the months and years ahead. Thank you for your input and support. 

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