

MU STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

**Recommendations from the Task Force
Co-Chairs of the Task Force
Brian Foster, Provost and
Richard Wallace, Chancellor Emeritus**

(Approved September 19, 2007)

Background

A critical element of MU's strategic planning is to identify the areas in which the University is positioned to be competitive with the best institutions of higher education. To identify such areas, it is important to identify those unique assets—e.g., facilities, collaborators, program strengths—that provide opportunities for extraordinarily competitive initiatives that can position MU uniquely in higher education. In 2006, Provost Brian Foster appointed a task force to identify such assets, which we called “strategic advantages.” After a great deal of campus input and discussion—written input, focus groups, public forums, discussions with deans and others—the Task Force approved its list of MU's Strategic Advantages. These advantages are not programs; rather they are the foundation stones on which competitive program initiatives can be built. MU faculty, deans, the Office of Research, external partners, and others will now create the program initiatives.

MU has unique assets that no one else has or can hope to have, which position MU uniquely in the world of higher education. These assets can take several forms:

- Unique mix of programs
- Collaboration with external partners
- Institutional culture
- Unique facilities

Facilities and environment

A. Nuclear reactor

- MU has the largest research reactor at any university in the U.S. Its activities include research, instructional, and production functions.

B. Interdisciplinary campus culture

- Faculty at MU work across disciplinary boundaries and are very entrepreneurial in putting together unusual and forward-looking initiatives. Interdisciplinary successes are numerous, including nano

science and materials, the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, and the broad collaboration on policy research.

C. Unique state-wide presence

- MU is a land-grant university with a public service commitment that touches every corner of the State of Missouri, with an Extension presence, including extension councils, students, and alumni in literally every county. Other examples include MU's Telehealth Network, Area Health Education Centers, and broad-based economic development initiatives.

D. External partnerships

- MU has strong corporate, governmental, foundation and other non-profit partnerships that complement program strengths, together enabling uniquely strong program thrusts in areas that will define the future of the U.S. and of the University. Some examples include the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, Washington University in St. Louis, Analytical Bio-Chemistry Laboratories Inc. (ABC Labs), and Cerner Corporation.

Unique program mix

1. Veterinary Medicine/Medicine/Animal Science

- MU is one of a half dozen universities with Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, and Animal Science on the same campus. This combination, when allied with Engineering, Biological Sciences, and other disciplines, allows unique approaches to comparative medicine in both basic and translational research and ultimately in clinical applications. (Intersects with A, B, and D above; also with 2, 3, 4, and 6 below.)

2. New Media

- Numerous programs at MU have interests that touch on new media. MU's premier Journalism program, which has a focus on new, global media, has strong relations with Missouri external partners (e.g., AT&T, Sprint, the Missouri Press Association, The Kansas City Star, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch) and with diverse programs across campus (e.g., engineering, especially digital design and imaging disciplines, writing, graphic design, and Center for the Digital Globe). Other important media programs whose interests overlap with those above

include the Center for eResearch, which partners with Apple and Adobe, the Museum of Art and Archaeology, and the School of Information Sciences and Learning Technologies in the College of Education. (Intersects with B, C, D, and 1 above, and 4, 5, and 6 below.)

3. Informatics

- MU's corporate and governmental partners give a unique shape to research and instructional efforts to extract information from very large data bases in areas as diverse as health care (Cerner) and geospatial data bases (Geospatial Intelligence Agency). Programs as diverse as Marketing, Environmental Science, Plant Genomics, and Epidemiology embody applications of informatics technologies. (Intersects with A, B, D, and 1 above, and 5 and 6 below.)

4. Aging

- MU's unique Tiger Place, along with corporate partner Americare, brings together numerous campus academic programs as diverse as Nursing, Health Professions, Sociology, Business, Engineering, Medicine, Human Development and Family Studies, Architectural Studies, Social Work, and the Center for Health Policy. Research in Animal Science, Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Nutrition, Education, Extension, and other areas contribute to a unique mix of campus initiatives in aging, with a particular emphasis on aging in place and on biomedical, clinical, and social aspects of aging. (Intersects with B, C, D, 1, 2, and 3 above.)

5. Agribusiness

- Missouri's two major urban areas bracket a uniquely strong agribusiness axis, with a Plant Science anchor in St. Louis and a world-prominent animal health cluster in the Kansas City area. MU plays a key role in this Agribusiness corridor, including partnerships with Monsanto, the Danforth Center, Bayer, and other prominent organizations. This axis aligns with the mix of MU programs (especially Animal Science, Plant Science, Life Sciences Center, Veterinary Medicine, and Biological Sciences), with the strong agricultural industry of rural Missouri, and with MU Extension's support network. (Intersects with A, B, C, D, 1, 2, and 3 above.)

6. Design disciplines and Imaging Technologies

- MU has a broad array of disciplines with strong design components, including Journalism, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Textiles,

Theatre, radio-nuclear imaging, computer design technologies in Engineering and elsewhere, and in the broadest sense, Engineering. These strengths intersect with imaging technology programs including film and animation technologies, Film Studies, geospatial analysis (Geography, Engineering, and application areas including Marketing, Environmental Studies, and Epidemiology), medical imaging, and Journalism. (Intersects with A, B, D, 1, 2, 3, and 5 above.)