A View to the Future

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MASTER PLAN SUMMARY REPORT
“...On the instant that the valley of the Kalamazoo River came to full view, it was proposed that the county school commissioner join D.B. Waldo in what was to be the most exhilarating adventure in public education yet to be experienced by mere man....”

**Historical account of 1903 selection of Ernest Burnham for a faculty position by D.B. Waldo, first principal of the Western State Normal School**
DEAR COLLEAGUES

Thanks to the energies and commitment of the State of Michigan, the City of Kalamazoo and the University community, Western Michigan University has grown from a single building in 1903 to a comprehensive campus that covers nearly 600 acres and includes more than 125 buildings. In 1998, three assessment and planning initiatives were undertaken to help chart a course for the University to better integrate future plans with those of our surrounding community. This Campus Master Plan is the outgrowth of that process.

As a leading institution of higher education, we are responding to the evolving expectations of our students and society by defining creative new approaches and solutions. The physical patterns conveyed in the plan help define a foundation for achieving University goals and the academic mission.

The plan responds to specific needs while understanding and respecting long term aspirations by defining a conceptual vision that is both broad and flexible. Projecting a compelling view of our institutional future, the Master Plan defines opportunities for accommodating growth and for achieving a more student friendly, functionally appropriate and attractive campus environment. This plan will help guide the leaders of Western Michigan University today and well into the future.

We are deeply appreciative of the creativity, commitment and collaboration that characterized this planning process. We are indebted to the people, both on our campus and in the greater community, who gave so generously to make this plan a reality.

ELSON S. FLOYD
WHY A MASTER PLAN?

As one of the nation’s top public research universities, Western Michigan University (WMU) continues to strive for academic excellence. Competition for the best students and faculty is intensifying and rising expectations require universities to adapt more quickly than in past eras. WMU needs a method to respond promptly and appropriately to new educational ideas and opportunities. A Master Plan is a tool that defines development options based on an institution’s inherent strengths, resources and vision.

WMU’s Master Plan not only allows for the most effective use of its resources, but also celebrates the institution’s 100 year heritage. From its start as a single building on top of Prospect Hill, the University now has more than 125 buildings spread over three distinct campuses. Today’s Master Plan seeks to unify and strengthen the University’s image by allowing the West, Oakland Drive and East Campuses to function cohesively while maintaining their unique character.

Earlier plans have guided WMU to its current position as a major regional institution. The primary goal of this Master Plan is to recognize the University’s goals as they relate to accommodating new development and enhancing the campus quality, diversity and livability. WMU has identified ways to enhance its image and the quality of student life in a manner that reflects the University’s commitment to academic, research and outreach activities.

MASTER PLAN APPROACH

Because the Master Plan directs the growth of the WMU campus over time, it has to be developed with and supported by the University community. Bringing together a broad range of campus users and neighbors, the planning process seeks individual perceptions, opinions and priorities to forge consensus on important issues and plan recommendations.

The master planning effort was one of the most interactive and participatory planning efforts ever undertaken by the University. Planning groups were established to ensure that diverse interests and perspectives were considered. An Advisory/Policy Committee, comprised of faculty and staff members, students, University administrators, and municipal and community representatives, guided the decision-making process. Subcampus focus groups (representing West Campus, Oakland Drive Campus and East Campus) and a range of student groups offered input and made recommendations.
Workshops with the campus planning staff, interviews with students, open community and campus meetings, a student survey, a web site, and a designated e-mail address supplemented the efforts of the focus groups. The diversity of participants and range of formats allowed the planning process to embrace broad, campus-wide issues, as well as area-specific issues. The final outcome is a plan that is supported and understood across the campus, within the neighborhood and the larger community.

**Process**

A creative, problem-solving approach strives to look at old problems in new ways. The planning process started with a careful look at natural features, historic development patterns, current uses and future growth projections to identify important issues and opportunities. As creative solutions began to emerge, they were expressed as a range of alternatives. The evaluation and refinement of these alternatives resulted in a Preliminary Master Plan that combined the most valuable elements of each. Further refinements ensured an appropriate balance and relationship between open space and pedestrian circulation, vehicular circulation, transit and parking, as well as architecture and development capacity.

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Western Michigan University
Master Planning Process Groups and Committees

Advisory/Policy Committee
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Vice President/Chief Financial Officer
Yvonne Asken
Director of Campus Planning
Richard St. John
WMU Board of Trustees; Kalamazoo Foundation
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Professor, Kalamazoo College; Vice Mayor of City of Kalamazoo
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Paul Pancella
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Linda Powell
Chair, East Campus Focus Group
Janet Pisaneschi
Chair, Oakland Drive Campus Focus Group
Frederick Sitkins
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AAUP Liaison, University Libraries
Kathy Beauregard
Director of Athletics
David Corstange
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Sharon Seabrook Russell
Assistant Director, Alumni Relations
Mary Godfrey
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Paul Solomon
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Debra Berkey
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Student, Geography; WSA, Chair of Campus Design Committee

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ImageWeavers Studios  Website design
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