

TRANSFORMING THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT: LEADING BY DESIGN FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND DESIRABLE FUTURE

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University of Vermont (UVM) President Daniel Fogel and Provost John Hughes, in describing a new vision for the university, have declared an aspiration for UVM to lead societal change and to serve as a catalyst and an engine of change --- “ a driving force that leads society by design to a sustainable and desirable future”. This vision was also shared with Dr. David Orr in a letter from the President and Provost following David’s extended visit at UVM during October 2006. This planning grant is the first step in achieving the visionary institutional transformation outlined in the President and Provost’s letter.

We seek a planning grant of \$80,000 from the Lewis Foundation to establish and articulate the strategic directions and specific design action plan necessary to transform UVM into a powerful agent of change in a world that is increasingly out of balance. We must begin by changing our culture and engaging our community --- redesigning education and how we envision and deliver it, along with the rest of the system necessary to provide a truly sustainable and desirable society.

At the core of our efforts is our understanding that re-envisioning our university’s role as a leader in developing solutions and promoting systemic change in society is a comprehensive design challenge and opportunity. Our efforts toward establishing new direction and action steps will be built upon sustainable design and ecological economics principles. We are undertaking a comprehensive approach to redesign, including curriculum, pedagogy, buildings, landscapes, procurement, and more.

Approach

We envision two dimensions to our efforts to create an action plan to bring about transformational change at The University of Vermont:

1. Create an internal Core Task Force responsible for the development, dissemination, and ultimate establishment (seeking buy-in) of an institutional action plan, and
2. Engage with external experts that can assist institutional efforts to bring about organizational change and develop sustainable systems.

Core Task Force – The task force will be charged by the President and Provost and led by Bob Costanza and Don DeHayes. It will include a dozen thoughtful and knowledgeable members of the university community, including deans, faculty, and physical plant professionals, as well as carefully selected members of the local business community with interest and experience in sustainable business practices. The Task Force will be staffed by two graduate students who will also ensure a student voice in the process.

The development of the *action plan* will begin by drafting a UVM Sustainability Charter --- a set of principles and indicators that will guide institutional actions and investments and guide the work and direction of the campus community. In addition, a web site will be created for the Task Force's work so that all documents, ideas, and recommendations can be made available to the larger campus, Burlington, and Vermont communities. Community forums will invite input, ideas, and reactions. This Task Force will address the full scope of institutional activities, including academic, physical plant, financial operations, economic development implications, and more, bringing design perspective to all aspects of university operations. Work has already begun on an informal basis, including the possible establishment of a virtual College that would focus on transdisciplinary study, analysis, and research at the interface of global ecosystems and human and planetary health. In addition, we have begun a dialogue about the creation of a new American Academy of Design Sciences, which we expect will be located on or near our campus. Initial campus reactions to these ideas have been positive and encouraging.

External Expertise – We recognize that institutional change is a significant undertaking, especially in the academic sector. We will benefit from the wisdom and expertise of others who are deeply knowledgeable about such change and/or who can describe examples of successful organizational change in other places. As such, we will invite speakers who can engage our community in discussion about the challenges and opportunities associated with the transformations we are proposing. While our speaker list is not finalized at this point, we will invite Peter Senge, distinguished expert on organizational learning and change and author of *The Fifth Discipline* and *Presence*, and Mona Selin, who lead the successful effort to promote sustainable development in Sweden.

The overall product of this planning effort will be a detailed action plan for transformational change that can be implemented over time following adaptive management principles. Implementation will take place over an extended time period and will require significant resources. Considerable effort will be expended to monitor and document the action planning process and implementation. We expect to publish and present papers that capture the essence of this transformational effort so that it can be shared with others on a broad scale.

Timeline

- 1 Submit Planning Grant Proposal to Lewis Foundation – January **2007**--
Organize and assemble Core Task Force, develop Charter, core meetings, organize speakers, engage UVM community, complete specific recommendations -- February through May
- 2 Develop draft report on transforming UVM, including specific recommendations -- August 2007
- 3 Receive Commentary on Draft report – fall 2007
- 4 Complete final report and action plan-December 31, 2007

Budget

Given the critical importance of this initiative to the future of our university, the academic sector broadly, and the broader world, Provost Hughes has committed additional support of \$20,000 to advance the effort. The budget breakdown is as follows:

Staff Support -----	\$15,000
Fringe @ 40% -----	\$6,000
Graduate students -----	\$24,000
Supplies -----	\$3,000
Meeting Expenses -----	\$20,000
Speaker Costs -----	\$25,000
Travel -----	\$7,000
Total Direct Costs -----	\$100,000
Request from Lewis Foundation:	\$80,000
Commitment from UVM Provost:	\$20,000