



Vision 2020

**Toward 150 Years of Distinction
& A New Gold Standard of University Performance**

The
University
of Akron



Developed by:

The University of Akron Community of Students,
Faculty and Staff

University of Akron Alumni, and Corporate
and Civic Stakeholders

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Higher Education Thought-Leaders

The Council of Deans

The Vice Presidents

The Provost's Advisory Committee

The Office of Academic Affairs

Office of the President

Board of Trustees:

Academic Issues and Student Affairs Committee

Strategic Issues Committee

Endorsed by the Board of Trustees

January 18, 2012

Approaching Our Sesquicentennial

As The University of Akron approaches its 150th anniversary in 2020, we are charting a course for impactful transformation that will define a new model of higher education, one whereby innovation drives us to be ever more relevant, connected and productive, and becomes the basis for every decision we make and every action we take. **Vision 2020** is about seeing more clearly, both into our future as we set a new performance standard, and a look back over nearly 150 years of extraordinary commitment to campus and community. **Vision 2020 sets A New Gold Standard of University Performance.**

Historic Symbols and Contemporary Symbolism

The image of the mythological phoenix graces our University seal as an enduring symbol of rebirth and renewal. It stands as a reminder of the necessity to reinvent, reinvigorate and redefine ourselves as we set our course for 2020. We also are mindful of another image that increasingly defines us: “Au”—the chemical symbol for gold—is the graphic metaphor for the “new gold standard” of university performance and the abbreviation for “Akron U,” the affectionate name by which we are known in our community.

We build on our unique history and distinctive strengths, refining our strategies, and reinventing our institution to continuously enhance our worth. Universities are the wellspring of the knowledge economy, bringing a high-value return on investment to our students and communities, creating opportunities and acting as economic engines for applied knowledge. The University of Akron forges a New Gold Standard of University Performance, one that is relevant, connected and productive, and will ensure the University captures its rightful destiny among the best public research universities in the nation and around the world.

Establishing the Strategic Framework

At the turn of the 21st century, The University of Akron introduced Charting the Course, a framework for strategic thinking that guided the institution’s actions for more than a decade. **Vision 2020** builds upon that legacy and

moves us toward our 150th year by actively recognizing and strengthening our critical role in enhancing the prosperity of our region.

As a statement of strategic intent, Charting the Course was designed to energize the University, provide direction, identify our distinctiveness, and develop a shared sense of destiny. Dedicating resources to those strategies enabled the University to attain a higher standard of excellence through campus growth and improvement, enrollment enhancement, revenue generation and diversification, and a process of mission evaluation that developed unique strengths. By leveraging core competencies, the institution achieved strong momentum in each of those areas, as well as in research, fundraising, athletics and community engagement. During this time, we markedly expanded our role as a catalytic presence for innovation and community wellbeing. We have brought people, ideas, energy, infrastructure, and resources into clusters of innovation to enrich our region.

For nearly two years, we have built on the momentum created by Charting the Course. We engaged more than 3,500 faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni, community leaders and national higher education thought leaders in a process of strategic visioning. Through workshops, open forums, online feedback and other venues, we have remained true to the spirit of shared leadership and transparency in the creation of a new framework for success and a newly stated vision for our future.

Vision 2020 depicts that future. It capitalizes upon distinctive attributes, competencies and expertise that position us as a catalyst for substantive change. **Vision 2020 provides a sharply focused paradigm in higher education that is guided by a set of principles widely accepted by those who participated in the strategic visioning process:**

- We believe in an inclusive approach to student success and academic excellence, and will provide opportunities for all students to excel and become part of an evolving global culture and economy.
- We are a catalyst for transformational change to strengthen our communities, and to expand our role as an active agent of regional economic development that is also globally relevant.
- We will facilitate innovative collaborations and partnerships across educational, industrial, community and government entities that can generate collective impact.
- We will foster innovation and entrepreneurship using world-class faculty research and discoveries to create new materials for the new economy and solutions to societal problems.
- We are deeply rooted in our community, celebrating the spectrum of human achievement while maintaining a unique and authentic sense of place and support for each other.

An inclusive University, whose engaged faculty produces world-class research while educating the next generation of thinkers and doers, can literally change the world. Merging innovation with broad-based education makes The University of Akron more relevant, more connected to the community, and more productive in terms of economic, social and human wellbeing.

Mission and Vision

Our Mission: To ensure student success and leverage our region's unique assets in the creation of knowledge and application of research that benefits humankind.

Our Vision: To set a new standard for public research universities in adding economic value and enriching lives.

Aspirational Goals

Our distinctive aspirations provide a foundation for achieving **Vision 2020** and a roadmap to a higher standard of university performance. These aspirations reflect our commitment to the principles of **relevance** (delivering tangible benefits to our campus and community), **connectivity** (achieving greater impact through partnerships, collaborations and collective initiatives) and **productivity** (adding value to the ecosystem with the University as an active agent of opportunity and innovation).

- Enroll up to 40,000 learners in degree, certificate, licensure, distance-education and career-advancement programs, improving alignment of the student body with professional and personal success
- Increase diversity with measureable improvements over time as a demonstration of our commitment to inclusive excellence
- Improve year-to-year persistence to graduation and graduation rates equal to or greater than 60% by streamlining and targeting pathways to degrees and jobs
- Improve year-to-year, post-graduation job or professional program placement in dynamic careers, approaching 80% within six months of graduation
- Diversify revenue sources and create a culture of continuous improvement including integrated planning and budgeting to support growth initiatives
- Increase annual research expenditures approaching \$200 million
- Annually increase the development portfolio with significant scholarship and unrestricted funds equal to or greater than \$1 billion
- Attain national recognition for The Akron Experience, which provides unique and integrated in-and-out-of-the-classroom learning experiences for each student
- Revitalize the campus “neighborhood” in collaboration with University Park Alliance and other anchor institutions, increasing development of real estate, business, social and human capital, and community/civic engagement
- Achieve recognition by the University System of Ohio, Board of Regents, and other higher education organizations as a leader in academic innovation that fuels student success, and community and economic growth
- Attain recognition nationally for The Akron Model, which creates successful economic and talent development partnerships to leverage

resources with government, nonprofits, business and industry for collective impact

- Benchmark our achievements against research-oriented, entrepreneurial and industrial-based universities identified nationally and internationally through publicly available performance measures

Pathways to Success

Inspired by our Mission and driven by our Aspirational Goals to achieve our Vision, we commit to providing financial and organizational support to the following strategies:

- **The Akron Experience: Academic & Inclusive Excellence**
- **Globally Relevant & Distinctive Programs**
- **Interdisciplinary Clusters of Entrepreneurial Innovation**
- **Connectivity for Economic Vitality**
- **Campus and Community Enhancement and Engagement**

These university-wide strategies will transcend the boundaries of colleges, schools and administrative units. **As described in the following pages, each strategic pathway is associated with performance measures essential to chart our progress toward Vision 2020.** Our commitment to fiscal integrity, academic excellence, quality assurance and strategic investment underlies our actions and measurement of our success. Our vision remains dynamic, with goal-oriented leadership agendas established annually. We will continuously mobilize the campus community to attain and sustain **A New Gold Standard of University Performance.**

STRATEGIC PATHWAY:

The Akron Experience: Academic & Inclusive Excellence

We will achieve academic and inclusive excellence through a commitment to enhance diversity in all academic programs and create targeted learning pathways that result in a remarkable university experience for each student. So-called traditional and non-traditional students, including working adults and veterans, will have a comprehensive and transformative learning experience through focused and deliberate programming, including e-learning and other methodologies. We will focus on critical thinking and communication skills that foster life-long learning and the ability to apply newly acquired knowledge to practical problems. Every student will understand and demonstrate creative problem solving, entrepreneurship and engagement in community.

We are a university that succeeds by including and not excluding. Our form of higher education has a transformative impact on every student, by creating multiple pathways and opportunities for academic, professional and personal success. The Akron Experience produces graduates who become citizens of the world, engaged in their communities.

Persistence to degree is one measure of student success, but our goal encompasses success in life, including attainment of personal goals, profes-

sional achievement and civic responsibility. Faculty will develop students' capacity to realize their potential and prosper as citizens of an increasingly diverse world. We will celebrate diversity by preparing students to work in multicultural environments.

The Akron Experience is a distinctive approach to combining academic and experiential learning, teaching our students to understand the combined power of culture and knowledge to advance society and the economy. We will create true "citizens of the world" who are prepared by their Akron Experience to understand and address societal needs.

Measurement of our success includes improved retention, persistence, and graduation rates, student satisfaction and engagement scores, increased diversity and participation of students in global programs and service learning experiences.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY:

Globally Relevant & Distinctive Programs

The University experience will reflect a global and multicultural mindset. For our students to succeed in a global marketplace, they must understand and appreciate cultural, racial and ethnic differences that contribute to an increasingly complex and interconnected world. We will develop more international learning opportunities and exchanges for students and faculty so that acquired knowledge can advance human wellbeing on a global scale.

We will promote innovative teaching and learning of world languages and cultures across a variety of disciplines; encourage collaborative research among nations; and foster intellectual and cultural interactions on campus and abroad. Learning resources and opportunities will be enhanced through the expansion of digital capabilities. We will gain greater global relevance in selected areas of research and clusters of excellence to leverage our institutional and regional strengths.

In today's borderless economy, we must help our nation remain the global leader in attracting, developing and retaining top talent to drive world-class innovation, research and development. Our recognition as a world leader in polymer research is the catalyst for the selective development of other similarly innovative and competitive programs. We must understand what the world demands of us and, as the President of Harvard University said in his 1909 inaugural address, we must "do the work the world wants done."

Measurement of our success includes more international exchange opportunities, development of globally relevant courses across disciplines, an

Our global success will be founded upon our proven formula of supporting research that applies innovative solutions to local problems with global impact. From polymers to fuel cell technology, from health to arts and culture, we resolve to build regional strengths into global leadership. We will bring Akron to the world and the world to Akron.

increase in international student enrollment and a more globally diverse student presence on campus.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY:

Interdisciplinary Clusters of Entrepreneurial Innovation

Our programs and curricula will transcend boundaries between disciplines and encourage collaboration among scholars, teachers, researchers and students. The synergy created by bringing together the disciplinary approaches in liberal arts, health care, social sciences, science and technology will create innovative solutions to the broader issues of community, government, business and nonprofit entities.

This university has a broad-based “tool chest” of expertise to fuel an economic engine that enhances the vitality of our region, nation and world. Faculty must collaborate with the community to create new opportunities for research excellence with greater relevance to industry. The result will be creative solutions to challenges and commercialization of technology that will continue to differentiate us.

We will expand our vital role in applying knowledge and intellectual capital to the success of local economic engines, including polymers, advanced materials, energy, health care, biotechnology, manufacturing, aerospace, financial and insurance services, and other emerging industries.

Measurement of our success includes the appointment of interdisciplinary faculty, and the development of programs and curriculum that combine the expertise of diverse faculty across departments and colleges. We will increase the number of partnerships between those who imagine, discover and create new ideas, and those who can bring them to life to improve our communities.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY:

Connectivity for Economic Vitality

Our legacy of effective collaboration with local governments, community partners and industry poises us for international leadership among institutions of higher learning. Our resources must be aligned with for-profit, not-for-profit and public partners to further advance economic and human welfare.

The Akron Model is about making everything we do relevant and connected to the economic health of our community. The University of Akron is a vital partner in bold initiatives like University Park Alliance, the Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron, the Innovation Alliance, and the University of Akron Research Foundation. All of these entities are forged on partnerships between researchers and visionaries, designers and creators,

The vast benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to creative problem-solving is found in an architectural metaphor on our campus: To transform the Quaker Oats factory into a living environment where students now reside, builders broke through and connected literal silos to engineer a facility far more versatile and useful than what existed before.

producers and funders, bringing individual and organizational resources together in a shared mission. The Akron Model is “the whole” that is exponentially greater than “the sum of its parts.”

Additionally, academic partnerships with other entities of higher learning provide affordable, efficient and relevant education, and services for effective resource management and more certain student success. Collaboration among educational institutions allows us to produce a workforce more relevant to the region, including entrepreneurs, educators, skilled technicians, and science and policy leaders.

Measurement of our success will be an increase in partnerships that result in greater revenue through funded research, knowledge transfer and patent approval, and public-private investments in growth, as well as continuously enhanced physical and teaching and learning environments.

The Akron Model unifies public and private entities, with higher education acting as an active agent of economic development and civic enhancement. Through shared resources and common goals, partnerships produce solutions relevant to human needs, and connections that bring diverse peoples and resources together for greater productivity.

STRATEGIC PATHWAY:

Campus and Community Enhancement and Engagement

The dramatic transformation of our campus into a New Landscape for Learning has improved both the learning and living experiences for faculty, students and staff. It is the most visible and physical example of the University’s transformative power. We commit to a continued enhancement of student residential life and experience, erasing the boundaries

between campus and community. Innovative public-private partnerships will invest in the growth of our campus and adjacent neighborhoods. Together with the University Park Alliance, we are creating safer and more livable campus and off-campus neighborhoods with permeable boundaries that enhance our interconnectedness with our community and enable us to strengthen each other.

Our shared and seamless physical space fosters greater interaction with the broader Akron community. The University will strengthen its magnetic draw as a cultural hub for the arts, thought leadership, exhibitions, and athletics. We welcome the community to the campus and enrich the intellectual, social and cultural experiences for students, faculty and staff. A stronger campus/community connection synergizes the development of all. Just as in our successful athletics program: We will not simply win championships; we will

create champions. This philosophy is the basis for The Akron Experience that blends academic and experiential learning into each student’s capabilities, helping to make the transition from campus to community seamless, and creating a new generation of “civic champions.”

Our students shall have a sense of place and an acknowledged responsibility for contributing to human wellbeing. Deeply embedded in The Akron Experience, students will merge campus and classroom learning with community involvement. Students and faculty will be engaged in their surroundings through community service and culturally diverse experiences.

Measurement of our success will include the completion of new residential and retail developments, the rehabilitation and increased security of neighborhoods, and additional cultural, social and athletic events contributing to a vibrant community.

Enhancing Revenues to Support Growth

Aggressive efforts to broaden and diversify our revenue sources are necessary to sustain our fiscal viability and allow us to strategically invest in innovative opportunities. A stronger financial portfolio provides increased accessibility and affordability for students.

We will launch new fundraising initiatives and develop our endowment, increasing its flexibility to meet student and institutional priorities. Our expertise in commercialization and licensing is another avenue that continues to yield success.

Integrated planning and budgeting drives a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. Through inclusive planning, reviewing, measuring and analyzing outcomes, we will provide more predictability in the budgeting process across the University, and consistently demonstrate how our strategic actions positively impact our operations.

Our strategic planning and budgeting process will achieve efficiencies and effectiveness in all university operations and enable us to optimize the organization's resources, collaborate and share services with other organizations, and utilize technology to its fullest potential.

In the face of continuing challenges to public funding, we will still dream, dare and do whatever it takes to improve our world. By demonstrating creative and entrepreneurial responses to challenges, we model for our students an unflinching acceptance of what is, and unflagging persistence to achieve what might be.

Measurements of Success

As we continuously assess our progress toward achieving **Vision 2020**, we will make necessary improvements along the way, always guided by our commitment to fiscal integrity, academic excellence, quality assurance and strategic investment. We commit to the alignment of resources in support of our goals through the annual budget process, internal reallocations, and the strategic distribution of investment funds. We recognize that our aspirational goals can best be achieved by improving the following measurements to success:

Fiscal Integrity Metrics:

- Ohio Senate Bill 6 composite score
- Revenues by category and per student FTE

- Expenditures by category and per student FTE
- Endowment assets total and per student FTE; ratio endowment assets per FTE to undergraduate tuition
- Outstanding debt (ratios of overall debt to expendable assets and of annual debt service to general funds; bond ratings)
- Facilities condition
- Facilities utilization efficiency (classrooms and laboratories)
- Sustainability (energy usage per square foot annually)

Academic Excellence and Quality Assurance Metrics:

- Ratio of full-time to part-time faculty and percentage of student credit hours taught by full-time faculty, part-time faculty and graduate assistants by category of course (general education, major and graduate/professional courses)
- Total research awards and expenditures
- Entering class average ACT scores and percentage ranked in top 25% of high school class
- First-year retention of first-time full-time students; persistence of all students toward degree; 6-year graduation rate by student demographic group
- Degrees awarded per student FTE
- The Akron Experience: freshman and senior year National Survey of Student Engagement scores for satisfaction and student engagement; number of research, internship, co-op, and service learning experiences

Strategic Investment Metrics:

- Number of full-time faculty
- Globalization: number of international students and faculty; number of students studying abroad
- Diversity: percentage of diverse faculty, staff and students
- Number and percentage of graduates in STEMM disciplines
- Externally funded research (number of research grants submitted, number of proposals awarded, total amount of awards)
- Knowledge transfer: invention disclosures, patent applications and patent awards; licenses granted; licensing revenues
- Scholarships: number of merit scholarships for entering students with greater than or equal to 3.0 HS GPA; average merit scholarship awarded; number of scholarships awarded to Pell-eligible students
- Shared Services ROI
- Advancing The Akron Model

Postscript

In 1870, our founders created this institution of higher learning as a gift to their community. They believed that education was fundamental to moral character development and service to humanity. Throughout our history, community and college, then university, were closely tied.

In 1913, the ordinance creating a public university reinforced this alignment, stating that the University “desires above all else to be readily and intelligently responsive to the needs of the city.”

We are grateful for the values of our founders and the vision of our leaders. Now, as we approach our 150th anniversary, our **Vision 2020** charts a new and even bolder course that is dynamic, innovative, exciting and vital to the success of our students and the entire Akron community.

Our discoveries will continue to improve the world and benefit humankind because The University of Akron will be relevant, connected and productive.

MISSION AND VISION

OUR MISSION

To ensure student success and leverage our region's unique assets in the creation of knowledge and application of research that benefits humankind.

OUR VISION

To set a new standard for public research universities in adding economic value and enriching lives.



PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

**"The Akron Experience"
Academic & Inclusive Excellence**

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**Globally Relevant
& Distinctive Programs**

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**Interdisciplinary Clusters
of Entrepreneurial Innovation**

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Connectivity for Economic Vitality

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**Campus and Community
Enhancement and Engagement**



ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

Enrollment Growth to 40,000

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Increased Diversity

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**Improved Graduation
and Professional Success**

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**\$200 Million Annual
Research Expenditures**

*

\$1 Billion Development Portfolio

*

Revitalized Campus Neighborhood

*

Recognition for Distinction

(The Akron Model and
The Akron Experience)

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**Diversified Revenue
to Support Growth**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

RELEVANCE * CONNECTIVITY * PRODUCTIVITY

Collaboration * Communication * Entrepreneurship * Fiscal Integrity * Innovation * Opportunity