**CONCEPT PAPER FROM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:**

**OBJECTIVE (F): Invest in physical facilities and information technology to foster community, creativity, productivity, and to inspire and enable excellence**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Objective being addressed in this concept paper is how UD, in the context of administrative and infrastructure units, can invest in physical facilities and information technology to foster community, creativity, productivity, and to inspire and enable excellence.

In an early meeting, the Infrastructure Committee worked to define key elements of an educational institution's infrastructure that could support (or hinder) a University's mission. The committee then established a list of infrastructure units in place at the University of Delaware and implemented a plan to solicit feedback from as many of the known "infrastructure" units at UD as possible. These meetings were held during the Fall 2014 semester and collected feedback and input from more than 1500 UD staff from 33 units as well as from Assistant Professors and College Business Officers from all of the Colleges. Supervisors and director feedback was collected separately to enable a more free flow exchange of ideas at meetings. Everyone was encouraged to share anonymous input and ideas by sending campus mail to the chairs of the infrastructure committee. The meeting format engaged participants to consider four questions about what UD can do to: A) Ensure a diverse campus community and welcoming environment; B) Systematically expand innovation and capacity for research; C) Recruit and retain the best faculty, staff, and students; and D) Enrich the undergraduate experience in and out of the classroom. Summaries of each of the specific ideas and suggestions coming from each unit were then shared back with the unit. The committee reviewed all of the input collected and identified common themes around each of the four topics. In reviewing all of the materials and considering the issues that were raised, the committee felt that the feedback was best presented as six (rather than four) objectives with a series of specific, often measurable tasks, that support each objective or that support multiple objectives (newly added topics are E) Improve campus climate by (breaking down silos and) fostering a culture of collaboration and creation towards a common goal; and F) Invest in physical facilities and information technology to foster community, creativity, productivity, and to inspire and enable excellence).

LESSONS LEARNED and COMMON THEMES

An investment in physical facilities and infrastructure is critical to every part of a modern university's operations because this infrastructure enables every aspect of scholarship, research, professional development, and community. In all meetings held with various units, a clear majority of campus constituents articulated a desire for more integration of functions across campus - among facilities units, between academic and support units, between staff, between faculty, staff, and students, and across intellectual disciplines and ideas. There was discussion about the lack of real-time reporting to stakeholders and the issues and outcomes that were created around not sharing project information in a timely fashion. There was a growing concern that resources which should be assigned to deferred maintenance have in fact been used for emergency repairs. Facilities staff felt that this places the University in the position of unnecessarily having to make critical capital investments at a later time. As noted in the infrastructure committee concept paper Objectives C and E (recruit and retain the best people and improving campus climate), the staff and managers of various levels expressed genuine interest in being more proactive in their responsibilities to advance the University in its mission.

STRATEGIC THEMES

There are a few key strategic themes that this committee recommends the University of Delaware consider to improve facilities and infrastructure on campus. First, UD should establish mechanisms to strategically identify and build or create (via renovation) new spaces that meet cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary needs on campus. Second, there should be a clear focus on maintaining necessary resources to support excellent staff, efficient operations, and ongoing maintenance of existing facilities. Third, improved integration of IT systems with facilities units and other units (e.g. HR) can increase efficiency of overall campus operations. Some of these improvements would also address issues raised in Objective E: improving campus climate. The key role of managers and supervisors in encouraging this cross-communication was regularly raised.  The Infrastructure subgroup believes that implementation of the specific tasks below represent key steps to elevating the excellence of  UD’s educational, scholarly, and community-based activities.

TASKS

**F.1) Create a multicultural and centralized tutoring/mentoring space (consolidating all forms of UD academic support and tutoring services for all courses, academic/language, ELI, etc. needs under one roof) to support and focus attention on success of all students**. *This Task also supports Objective A: diverse community and welcoming environment as well as Objective D: enriched undergraduate experience.*

**F.2) Provide the appropriate resources to ensure that Facilities Planning and Construction is adequately staffed to manage current and planned capital projects and require project management teams to communicate with each other and project stakeholders in a timely manner.**

**F.3) Ensure that the University Architect’s Office and Facilities Planning and Construction include input from Facilities Maintenance & Operations, consultants, vendors, and stakeholders in the design and planning process during the life of the project, including in any value engineering decisions.**

**F.4) Provide adequate resources to allow for preventative and ongoing maintenance of existing facilities infrastructure.**

**F.5) Invest in improved mechanisms for communication among backend IT systems and in end-user training on the role and use of those systems.** *This Task also supports Objective C: recruit and retain the best people.*