

UMBC

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The newly designed library, center, will be the signature building for UMBC. The architects envision a landscaped field in front of the library, with a focal point—perhaps a bell tower—for the heart of the campus. At right is the Biological Sciences Building.

FIELD OF DREAMS

Our Blueprint for the Future

Over a year ago, the UMBC community began to think seriously about the campus design—its buildings, grounds, parking, and general ambience. “How would you like the campus to look?” “What’s missing?” “What’s good about our campus?” were some of the questions we were asked by LDR, Inc., the architectural consultants who were chosen to prepare a Campus Facilities Master Plan that will guide our building strategy for the next 20 years.

The consultants began their task by reading up on UMBC—everything from our mission statement to traffic studies and enrollment projections. This was followed by interviews with a cross-section of people on campus.

From these interviews they heard: We need more color among the red brick buildings, more grassy spaces for students and teachers to congregate. We need more—much more—classroom space. Parking is a constant source of trouble—we need closer lots, and more of them. More recreation areas; more residence halls; more student services; a performing arts center, including a theater. We need to replace the temporary buildings that house campus maintenance activities with an attractive, permanent physical plant structure.

The consultants listened and took notes. When they returned with their suggestions for campus development, they understood why the campus had grown as it has, and where it should go from here—funds permitting.

The first master plan for UMBC began in the

mid-sixties with a clean slate. The campus was intended to be 100% commuter. Every building was to be within a 10-minute walking distance of the others. The campus was laid out on a grid, with a slight jog in its center to accommodate topography. Encircled by Loop Road, the design came to look like a clock face with the library at its center and the Administration Building at its 6. Academic buildings developed along an axis from the library down to the 6.

UMBC today is 80% commuter, with a collection of dorms in the upper portion of the clock, and a growing need for student services to serve both commuters and residents.

The consultants have proposed both a friendlier and a more manicured look for the campus as temporary buildings and parking sprawl give way to an organized design. “Some people wanted more green space between buildings, some wanted a more intimate campus. We compromised, settling on closeness and a softening of the buildings with ‘image spaces,’” explains LDR representative Diana Rich.

The next seven years should see the completion of the engineering building and the third phase of the library, as well as a new residence hall, an expansion to the Fieldhouse, and relocation of the physical plant shops to Poplar Avenue. A third building for the sciences will start a new axis of development from the library east to Loop Road (3 on the clock). This axis will eventually be a 200-foot-wide grassy mall, lined on both sides by buildings for classrooms, labs, and faculty offices.

LDR recommends a phased approach to our

parking problem, starting with a 180-car surface lot on Poplar Avenue and ending years from now with several garages that will serve development on different sides of the campus.

UMBC Boulevard was chosen as the primary image entrance to the campus. Though not the highest traffic entrance (it carries about 30%), it is the entrance most used by first-time visitors. An identity feature, conceived as a gateway, will mark that entrance as primary, with a smaller complementary gateway to the Research Park tying that development to the campus.

LDR proposes reducing the double road beside the Fieldhouse to a single road that hugs Lot 10, allowing space for a gentler grade up to the plaza between the Administration Building and an expanded Fieldhouse. The consultants suggested adding color and movement to the entry plaza with perhaps a banner on the side of the Social Sciences Building and a stand of flagpoles. The walls along the Administration Drive sidewalk would be replaced with grass and trees in this projection.

Farther along, the addition of steps leading down to the library pond would give this area an open, inviting look.

The proposed plan assumes an increase in enrollment from 10,000 to 16,000 students over the next 20 years. “Because you are already operating at a real space deficit now, we had to plan for future growth as well as for catching up,” says Ms. Rich. Thus the plan calls for a doubling of academic space on campus.

With the library addition designed to be the signature building for the campus, the firm recom-