

# UMSL University of Missouri-St. Louis

Presentation to CBHE December 11, 2014

UMSL is the public metropolitan land grant research university in the St. Louis metropolitan region. With approximately 17,000 students including degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students and advanced credit students earning college credit while still in high school, we prepare graduates for the work force in the metropolitan area and beyond. UMSL students come from the bi-state St. Louis metropolitan area, and from outstate Missouri and Illinois, many other states, and numerous other countries. The majority of UMSL students stay in the metropolitan area after graduation so it can truly be said that UMSL educates St. Louis.

## Mission Statement

The University of Missouri–St. Louis provides excellent learning experiences through an outstanding faculty and staff, innovative research, and creative partnerships that prepare our diverse student body to benefit the St. Louis region and the global society.

## Strategy Statement

By 2018, UMSL will increase the annual number of degrees conferred by 20% through an enriched UMSL experience with enhanced relationships and more research and community engagement integrated into student learning to fulfill our metropolitan land-grant mission.

## Issues

UMSL has experienced issues and challenges over state budgets for higher education including concerns about access and affordability for students. Maintaining educational and research quality in periods of stable or declining resources is increasingly difficult. We have made considerable efforts to increase degree completion both of current students and returning adult students who have completed some college credits but do not have degrees. This is our strategic goal and a strong focus of our strategic plan. Continued attention to affordability is essential for degree completion success.

UMSL was founded in 1963 at the urging of residents of St. Louis, with assistance from the Normandy School District and other North County municipalities and school districts. Over the past 51 years, the campus has grown from the former site of the Bellerive Country Club with a few hundred students to nearly 17,000 students on campus in North County and in locations all over the metropolitan area and online. UMSL has some of the most diverse students and faculty in Missouri. In addition to traditional students, access to higher education is very important for adult learners, both those starting new and returning degree completers, who often desire online classes and degree offerings. UMSL also offers classes for upper division degree completion on several community college campuses and in other locations to serve students who want to take classes face-to-face and complete their degrees near their home or work locations.

As the public metropolitan land grant university in the largest population area of the state, UMSL emphasizes affordability and community involvement as well as quality undergraduate and graduate education. UMSL has raised private gifts and allocated public funds to provide scholarships based on need to help students afford a university education. Our partnerships with community colleges also improve affordability as 75% - 80% of UMSL undergraduate students transfer to UMSL, most commonly from community colleges. State scholarship programs, such as the A+ scholarships, help many students with their first two years in community colleges. A similar program for four-year universities and/or for the last two years for degree completion at universities to help students attain their baccalaureate degrees would improve affordability even more. UMSL has many partnerships in the community with nonprofit organizations and businesses that allow our students to volunteer in the community, as well as have one or more paid internships. UMSL has over 30 endowed professors in the Des Lee Collaborative Vision who work with community partners and provide opportunities for students on and off campus.

UMSL has improved both retention of students from entry (either as freshmen, transfer students, or graduate students) through completion of their degrees, and graduation rates. Targeted retention activities, including improved advising, have helped students complete their degrees successfully in less time. Scholarship assistance, including the new "complete your degree" scholarships for undergraduate students within one or two semesters of graduating, has been instrumental in assisting students, as well. Many of our students exhaust their financial aid before completing their degrees, so these scholarships are significant for degree completion.

Faculty research at UMSL includes, for example, projects on health and nursing care, baby formulas for infants, eye care, criminal justice policies and practices, affordable housing, K-12 education, international business, and bird biology in the Galapagos Islands and in Missouri. Undergraduate and graduate students are involved in research with faculty members, often from the beginning of their education at UMSL. Projects such as these contribute to the high quality of their education and to the preparation of students for employment or graduate degrees.

Students and faculty are observing new construction at UMSL this year, including the Recreation and Wellness Center, set to open in summer 2015, and the Science Learning Building with state-of-the-art teaching labs that will open in the 2015-2016 academic year. Also in the works are the planned Optometry College Patient Care Center and the College of Business Administration building, both expected to begin construction soon. All these buildings are funded by a combination of UMSL funds, student fees, and private fund raising. UMSL is waiting to receive support for the Business building from the state matching funds initiative approved last year.

UMSL students, faculty, staff, and administrators thank the CBHE for this opportunity to participate in the planning process.