

LEADERSHIP LESSONS



Driven to Discover: Elements of Identity

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PROJECT

As the most recent addition to the University of Minnesota system, the Rochester campus has an important role to play in achieving the University's goal of becoming a top three public research university. Elevated to the status of a coordinate campus within the last eight months, UMR is ramping up for a significant expansion and grappling with many changes. To frame these pending changes and growth, UMR commissioned the PEL Program to develop a project to discover the elements critical for building UMR's identity.

RESULTS

- Invisibility, diverging opinions, and missing key elements create the sense UMR has no identity.
- Partnerships are important, both now and in the future.
- UMR's future success will require strong, visionary, and effective leadership as well as resource investment.

UMR will need to continue to maintain its new identity through changing political administrations, area demographics, and trends in academia.

- Expand dialogue with partners.
- Seek strategic new partnerships.
- Commit to UMR and demonstrate support in action.
- Empower UMR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UMR is poised to make major contributions to its community and the larger arena of higher education. UMR has the chance to transform the face of higher education by taking advantage of new technology, resources, and industry partnerships. The first step in leveraging this opportunity is to establish a clear identity.

Recent changes and the current political atmosphere make this the ideal environment for UMR to define its identity.

- Use existing elements as a basis for a new identity.
- Let imagination be the only constraint for considering UMR's future.
- Foster UMR's mission and vision as a guide for strategic planning and decision-making.
- Create a campus-wide community.
- Identify appropriate venues for community engagement.

Create the Identity

Reinforce the Identity



Communicate the Identity

A strategic communication plan to promote and manage UMR's emerging identity is critical. UMR needs to invest resources for a major branding and communications effort.

- Create and continually share consistent messages regarding UMR.
- Frame UMR's identity so it resonates effectively with stakeholders and builds additional support.
- Use the existing University of Minnesota brand as a springboard for UMR.

PROCESS

Data was collected via a telephone survey, 11 focus groups, and 21 individual interviews.

Telephone survey

Three UMR-specific questions were included in the University's annual public opinion survey of Minnesota residents, conducted from December 4-11, 2006. Statewide, 800 adults age 25 and older were interviewed. This survey included:

- an oversample of 100 opinion leaders (news-attentive, affluent registered voters with college educations)
- an oversample of 150 Rochester-area residents

Focus groups and interviews

Participants were identified and targeted in consultation with the project sponsor and UMR executive team.

- Greater Rochester Advocates for Universities and Colleges (GRAUC)
- Rochester Area Alumni and Friends of the University of Minnesota (RAAFUM)
- Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- Rochester City Council
- Rochester Higher Education Development Committee (RHEDC)
- Rochester Public Schools' high school guidance counselors
- Rochester School Board
- State senators, representatives, and appointed officials
- UMR students (both undergraduate and graduate)
- UMR staff
- Select University administrators