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**To:** The Strategic Planning Coordinating Council

**From:** John DeBoer, Faculty Senate Chair

**Date:** October 25, 2016

**Re:** UM Strategic Vision: Creating Change Together Version 1.0

Several times over the last week ECOS solicited feedback regarding the UM Strategic Vision: Creating Change Together. Originally, we intended to draft a response that addresses the variety of feedback we received from across campus into a comprehensive document. However, the proposed strategic plan presents such a bold and potentially divisive vision for the future of UM that the diverse number of responses were impossible to distill into what could be considered consensus amongst the Faculty. Most of those who responded with feedback also copied the SPCC. So, much of the feedback presented below were common themes worth reiterating.

Any document the University puts out which articulates its Vision needs to include and highlight existing strengths we intend to continue to support, rather than list off the things we think we need to do better. The future of UM (both fiscal and academic) must be mission-aligned as well as vision-aligned. The vision, via the strategic opportunities, lists some areas where we want to improve, but what we do is largely determined by our mission (which is missing from the current strategic plan). The plan must integrate and emphasize the world-class strengths of University of Montana in research and creative scholarship. This document will be read externally by stakeholders who are not familiar with our current strengths – including the future president and the future provost. We need them to come in understanding what we do well and committed to helping us continue those things. The broader vision of the strategic opportunities presented are well intentioned and should be ideals inherent in a flagship state university. However, the specific initiatives tend toward administrative solutions that would shift money from instruction to administration. We need to focus our limited budget on leveraging academic resources and working hard to prioritize funding to the academic rather than administrative units.

As we promote “place”, we have to keep in mind that we are trying to not only attract students who want to earn a place-based major, but also students who want to study one of our many successful majors that are not place-based. Our place also carries some unique challenges - particularly in terms of engaging students from diverse and underrepresented populations. We acknowledge that workforce education and training that addresses the needs of our community is important. UM has the premier professional schools in the state with a high quality liberal arts preparation that supports career and life long success as well-rounded civic-minded citizens. However, perhaps the liberal arts section falls too heavily on skills at the expense of content. The University and Missoula College can only train so many specialists for a community of about 110,000 people, before saturation is reached. How do the proposed "core competencies" [problem solving, adaptability, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and ethical reasoning (PAC4E)] align to the current general education learning objectives?  What would be gained and what lost?

Finally, the push for an R1 designation seems at odds with the increased focus on the liberal arts curriculum and the resource realities we are facing. This may set up a resource war on campus that will only exacerbate the divide between the haves and have-nots. Fundamentally, there is are a finite number of graduate students that individual faculty can support. Ultimately, if UM wants to grow graduate programs, they need to add faculty in research intensive graduate programs on campus. Increasing grant funding is certainly desirable, but the R1 goal may not be a top priority to pursue at this time. That said, we must continue to promote and increase the profile of research and creative scholarship at UM. It has enormous sway in recruiting top undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Research provides experiential learning for students and provides practical solutions to improve life for Montanans, Americans, people globally, and for the rest of the species on earth.