

**Miami University  
Strategic Planning Committee  
National University Subcommittee**

This document was developed after research, discussions and significant contributions of the members of the National University Subcommittee (see membership below) and submitted to the co-chairs of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee on March 4, 2019. This document was then made available to the other five subcommittees so they might incorporate any appropriate recommendations from this report into their work and subcommittee reports. This report is a working document and its contents are not meant to be final in any way, nor approved by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

***National Subcommittee Members:***

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**Our aspirational statement for Miami as a National University.**

From President Crawford's presentation at Lewis Place on December 19, 2018: *"Our aspiration to be a national university, a model of higher education in the 21st century, is predicated not on the scope of our research program or the growth of our student population or our ranked selectivity, but upon the kind of learning community we are, the transformative experience that students have at Miami and the impact for good that our graduates have on the world. We have a purpose as a Public Ivy – to serve individuals and society with a holistic and humane education that empowers each person to achieve their goals – and we instill values, purpose, character and intellect into our students so that they can be effective change agents in their own life and work."*

At Miami, we aspire to be known nationally for excellent undergraduate education that is fueled by highly engaged students and innovative pedagogy, for a student experience that supports and enhances the whole person, for outstanding programs in a few select areas and for encouraging innovation in all aspects of the university.

We revised our charge from "Should we be a National University?" to "What can Miami do to improve our reputation and ranking as a National University?" We believe that we compete and survive by following a path of growth centered around in-demand academic programs, improving facilities,

enhancing existing programs and areas of strength, enriching the already strong student experience, and leveraging curricular, co-curricular and career experiences. We suggest that our guiding principles in this process are: to raise our visibility, to improve our reputation as an institution with outstanding undergraduate education, to strive to differentiate Miami in the marketplace and to boldly embrace those measures that can make an impact on reputation and ranking.

#### **Evaluation of current state:**

In the context of this discussion, a National University has been defined and rankings made by U.S. News & World Report (USN&WR). Miami is not in the category of National Liberal Arts Colleges, which “emphasize undergraduate education and award at least half of their degrees in the liberal arts fields.” We are in the category of National Universities, defined as those that “offer a full range of undergraduate majors plus master’s and doctoral programs.” In addition, U.S. News & World Report describes National Universities as being committed to producing groundbreaking research. The method that determines the ranking score involves the following six primary criteria, some with sub-criteria:

1. Outcomes (35% of ranking)
  - a. Social mobility (5%) – number of students who receive and graduate with Pell Grants
  - b. Graduation and retention rates (22%)
  - c. Graduate rate performance (8%) – complex calculation factoring in a number of things
2. Faculty Resources (20% of ranking)
  - a. Class size (8%) – higher proportions of small enrollment courses (< 20 highest credit; 20-29 next highest credit; 30-39; 40-49; >50 receive no credit)
  - b. Faculty salaries (7%) – adjusted for COI
  - c. Proportion of faculty with highest degree in fields (3%)
  - d. Student-faculty ratio (1%)
  - e. Proportion of faculty who are full-time (1%)
3. Expert opinion (20% of ranking)
  - a. Peer assessment (15%) – presidents, provosts, deans of admission are polled throughout country
  - b. High school guidance counselors (5%)
4. Financial Resources (10% of ranking) - Spending on instruction, research and student services counts; spending on sports, dorms and hospitals does not count
5. Student Excellence (10% of ranking)
  - a. acceptance rate (1.25%)
  - b. standardized tests (7.75%) - some students are not included in this calculation
  - c. high school standing (2.25%)
6. Alumni giving (5%) - giving by bachelor's alumni during a two-year window (for 2018 it was 2015-16 and 2016-17)

What makes Miami a National University? We are a National University based on several aspects – some that affect ranking while others that contribute to mission and reputation: high academic quality of our admitted students (criterion 5); a strong peer reputation (criterion 3), especially for undergraduate education and our liberal education focus in a public university; strong graduation and retention rates

(criterion 1); attracting students nationally and internationally; a high percentage of undergraduates who study abroad prior to graduation; and alumni giving rate and involvement (criterion 6). An examination of the top 25 schools on the National University list includes some large state universities that have very successful, nationally-ranked sports programs, huge endowments and hundreds of millions of dollars in research spending and external grants, along with elite private universities with even larger endowments and similar research spending and external grants. The top schools have large numbers of Pell grant recipients (criterion 1), and several of the schools have implemented targeted strategies to maximize the components of the rankings (some say they may have “gamed” the system by, for example, increasing the number of small enrollment courses (criterion 2) while allowing any course with >50 students to have very high enrollments). It is clear that Miami won’t be able to reach top 25 in the National University list because we won’t have the resources to do some items, such as increase research spending to >\$100 million (criterion 4), or develop nationally-ranked football and basketball programs (this will affect criteria 3 and 5 but won’t affect criterion 4). It is also clear that Miami may not wish to invest in affecting certain rankings, such as increasing the number of low enrollment courses and balancing loads by increasing the size of student sections to large numbers (criterion 2), because this approach is not in the best interests of our students. There are certain ranking criteria we cannot impact due to resources or other circumstances (i.e. athletic conference), but we can identify appropriate ranking criteria, develop strategies that affect them, and make institution-wide decisions to implement those strategies.

In the 2018, U.S. News & World Report Rankings of Best Colleges, Miami University ranked #78 (tie) on the list of National Universities. However, the ranking criteria and emphasis changed for the 2019 list, and our ranking in the same category decreased to #97 (tie). We want to increase our ranking on this list while staying true to our mission.

The elite and wealthiest universities are pulling away from everyone else because of their financial resources and ability to recruit the best students from around the world. The highly-rated public universities enjoy the benefits of scale and have more diverse revenue streams. We believe that if Miami gets the strategies and priorities right, the national reputation will follow. The National University Subcommittee will make a series of recommendations that are grounded in supporting Miami’s mission, maintaining quality and efficiency, and increasing visibility.

#### **Primary Strategies in support of improving Miami’s reputation as a National University.**

The National University Subcommittee took two distinct approaches that were ultimately combined into a cohesive focus. We had a subgroup that focused on the elements of the national rankings, while the other subgroup focused on ideas to improve our national reputation and visibility (enhance current areas, create a few new areas). We identified three major strategies, and provide recommendations to support each.

**Strategy #1:** *Leverage our strengths – identify a few areas that we do well, and enhance and leverage them.*

**Strategy #2:** *Identify and bridge the gaps - develop new targeted initiatives that are bold, strategic and intentional to enhance Miami’s standing and reputation as a National University.*

**Strategy #3:** *Improve our ranking - develop and implement strategies and tactics to intentionally improve select rating criteria that we can impact.*

### Recommendations to support our three major strategies.

The recommendations below are connected to one of the three major strategies. Some of these recommendations are designed to directly address ranking issues, while others are efforts to raise our visibility and differentiate Miami. Those that target rankings are noted by a parenthetical reference to one or more ranking criteria.

**Strategy #1:** *Leverage our strengths – identify a few areas that we do well, and enhance and leverage them.* (in priority order)

- **Enhance and coordinate the experience, opportunities and support for high-achieving students.**
  - *Recommendation:* Investigate the feasibility of an Honors College that is sustainable and distinctive, along with a holistic review of all scholars' experiences with the goal of a cohesive set of programs for high-achieving students (criterion 5). Provide support for complementary cross-divisional programming that serves students not just in the Honors College and additional support for national fellowships. Create a position that focuses on grooming students for national fellowships and that can support and advise them throughout this process. While this position could have a dual purpose and support Miami's Presidential Fellows, it could also support all Miami students in their quest for national fellowships.
  - *Brief Rationale:* The competition for high-ability students has become increasingly fierce in the past several decades, making it challenging to attract the highest caliber students to Miami. Many peer institutions (both large research universities, regional public universities and small liberal arts colleges) have begun developing honors colleges as a means of recruiting strong students. We can build on our strength in honors programming to create an honors college and provide structure to other scholars' programs. Our students would benefit by coordination with other scholars' experiences across the university. In a benchmarking exercise, Miami University was found to be the ONLY institution in the Mid-American Conference (MAC) that did not have a dedicated position for National Fellowships; our peer institutions in the MAC have enrolling academic profiles that are well beneath Miami's.
  - *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Academic Excellence and Transformative Student Experience subcommittees. Consult with Zeb Baker as an excellent resource, as some work in this area is under discussion.
  
- **Enhance undergraduate programs in areas that are in demand now and those that will continue to be in demand.**
  - *Recommendation:* Develop a process (including financial considerations) and conduct an overall review of bachelor's degree majors – do we have the right mix and number of majors? Do we have existing “pillar” areas that we are known for, or do they need to be defined? Are there enrollment-controlled majors that can attract net-new students if caps are raised?
  - *Brief Rationale:* Miami has 138 undergrad majors (as counted in the list of bachelor's degree majors in 2018-2019 bulletin). The top 25 national universities have an average of ~70 majors. We do not have the luxury and financial capacity to be all things to all people. A process should be created to periodically review Miami's collection of

bachelor's degree programs. Consider pillar areas in boldly creative defined themes such as data analytics, health or other areas of excellence. For example: Health as a "pillar" would focus on pre-professional health programs (pre-med, nursing, Kinesiology, Nutrition, Public Health).

- *Next steps/comments:* Consideration by Academic Excellence (based on discussions that a curriculum planning committee is under consideration) and Financial Sustainability.
- **Determine priorities in graduate education and research funding and focus efforts accordingly.**
  - *Recommendation:* Review our mix and number of graduate programs (both PhDs and masters). Should any be eliminated or beefed up? Can we build on areas of strength? Should we define new areas? Strategically grow research infrastructure and provide more support to secure and manage external funding and promote visibility of Miami research (criteria 3 and 4).
  - *Brief Rationale:* Many National Universities have substantial resources for graduate programs that support their reputations, and they attract and invest funds into research. We can attract even more outstanding faculty with such programs, and increase the level of undergraduate research. Our level of research funding is very low compared to other universities with similar rankings. In fact, in the state of Ohio, only one state-supported school has less funding. It's often been noted that most national universities have a PhD program in engineering and in physics.
  - *Next steps/comments:* Research subcommittee, Academic Excellence subcommittee. Include someone (Rose Marie Ward?) from the Graduate School in the discussions of graduate programs.
- **Reinvigorate our liberal education core for the 21st century, to maintain our competitive advantage in this area.**
  - *Recommendation:* Revitalize the Miami Plan as a vehicle for creating institutional differentiation and recognition. Consider an increased focus on outcomes and incorporating themes such as leadership, entrepreneurship/innovation, global readiness, research, service and data analysis. (criteria 3 and 5)
  - *Brief Rationale:* Many elite universities have a strong focus on their core that brands them. We have been known for our liberal education core, but research shows our approach is now very similar to others and no longer differentiates us. In addition, we were graded a "C" a few years ago for our liberal ed program by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), in a review labeled "What Will They Learn? 2018-2019" (page 94). Can we update the Miami Plan with more distinguishing characteristics and fewer requirements that just check boxes?
  - *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Academic Excellence subcommittee; connect with Liberal Education Council and CTE.
- **Lead the way in innovative and effective undergraduate pedagogy.**
  - *Recommendation:* Review, revitalize and chart the way forward for Miami to remain a leader in undergraduate education and pedagogy. (criteria 3 and 5). Continue to advance Miami nationally as a leader in student success through strategic and intentional PR efforts. Work with a PR firm to ensure we are maximizing our ability to tout successful programs and publicize the success of at-risk and underserved students, as well as those who are part of the general student population. This kind of repeated

recognition of Miami's unique and intrusive mentorship in undergraduate education will continue to further support our place in this category

- *Brief Rationale:* We should not assume we can keep our high ranking in undergraduate education by staying the same. How do current students learn and what innovations can we promote to enhance teaching and learning? We have a solid foundation with Howe Writing Center, Rinella, CTE, Lilly Conference and journal, etc.
  - *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Academic Excellence and connect with CTE.
- **Reinvigorate the student residential experience; enhance student life experiences, including LLCs, with a focus on inclusion.**
    - *Recommendation:* Develop a “Boldly Creative” strategy to review and enhance the student life experience with a focus on campus living (dorms and dining), off-campus connections, the town-gown relationship, and reimagining and updating the Living-Learning Community structure on campus (criterion 3).
    - *Brief Rationale:* Miami is “all-in” as a residential campus and we need to ensure that the experience is value-added for our students. Many national universities have encouraged inclusive community in their student life experiences. Miami created the LLC and we were at the forefront in this area a decade ago. Can we lead the way again? Location is often noted as a negative factor when thinking about Miami in comparison to other schools. We must shift the perception of our location and embrace Oxford as a college town built for its students and Miami as a campus where living and learning intersect to create a seamless and cohesive 24/7, 4-year, immersive and transformative learning experience. Consider how the residential experience could support the elements of a National University – student success, undergraduate teaching, pillars of excellence, and how those could them be positioned to strengthen Miami's national reputation.
    - *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Transformative Student Experience subcommittee.

**Strategy #2:** *Identify and bridge the gaps - develop new targeted initiatives that are bold, strategic, and intentional to enhance Miami's standing and reputation as a National University.*

- **Create appropriate academic programs to distinguish Miami from others (i.e., you go to Miami for...); define Miami “pillars” of excellence.**
  - *Recommendation:* What programs can we create (new, combined or revised) in the president's three areas of focus (health, data analytics and entrepreneurship/innovation)? How do the Boldly Creative proposals intersect with these? What are the emerging areas that will be in demand, for which we can reasonably create and support programs? Do these coalesce into “pillars”? We should approach this process with a sense of urgency and quickly create and implement any new programs we define.
  - *Brief Rationale:* Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (national and Ohio) show that the in-demand areas are those Miami has already identified – health (physician assistant, occupational therapist and physical therapist) and STEM (statistician, mathematician, information security analyst, software developer, engineer and computer scientist). It also supports developing professional programs such as an MS in Nursing, a PA program, a MS in Data Science, and an MS in Information Security. Have graduate programs in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy been considered?
  - *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Academic Excellence Subcommittee.

- **Raise our visibility through innovative ventures that increase external interactions.**
  - *Recommendation:* Develop, enable, and market “outreach interactions” that showcase areas of strength at Miami in new and different ways (criterion 3). Remove barriers that inhibit innovative collaborations with external entities (business, governmental organizations, etc.). Create mechanisms to facilitate the establishment and nurturing of collaborative work with external entities.
  - *Brief Rationale:* We can create a variety of “outreach interactions” that utilize current resources, engage our faculty with business/industry/government, involve alumni and attract engagement outside of Miami. All of these efforts would help raise our national profile. There are many innovative ideas that could be funneled into programming that is not focused on earning credits. Below are a few ideas proposed by members of the subcommittee.
    - Our strength in undergrad education --> summer workshops for college professors.
    - Alumni involvement --> target them with online, consulting, webinars, one-week programs on campus, weekend programs; use them as experts to showcase the next big thing (criterion 5).
    - Faculty connections/collaborations --> make it easier to create workshops, pay consultants, build partnerships.
    - Student life --> programs promoting healthy students, addressing alcohol culture.
    - Bringing new people to campus --> utilize summer; market Miami as “film-ready.”
    - Connections with business, industry, government, etc. --> increased focus on co-ops and internships.
    - Alumni and friends marketing --> Involve and showcase alumni in marketing Miami (more ideas below in item 2d.)
  - *Next steps/comments:* Does not really fit with any subcommittee. Additional ideas and clarification can be provided by Kim Tavares (Alumni office) and Rose Marie Ward (Graduate School).
- **Create and encourage inter/cross disciplinary programs for students and provide support.**
  - *Recommendation:* Evaluate how we can make programs (curriculum) and advising easier for students who want to combine programs/disciplines (double major, major/co-major, major/minor). Should this advising be centralized? Can DARs be created for the most common combinations of double majors? Create and market unique 4+1 programs that can be completed in four years with the addition of strategically planned summer and Winter Term courses. These programs could be advertised at a “reduced rate” and could ultimately lead to more efficient use of our physical plant, while at the same time generating revenue and elevating Miami’s value proposition to the marketplace.
  - *Brief Rationale:* Once students graduate, their professional lives require them to work across disciplinary areas. In addition, today’s graduates will likely have several different careers during their lives. We should assist our students in preparing for an interdisciplinary world. Several National Universities have a variety of interdisciplinary majors with defined curriculum. Our students, in contrast, often need to figure out their own path, as an adviser for program A often knows nothing about program B’s requirements. Miami students want to combine programs, as evidenced by the following current data on “combo programs” (major/co-majors not counted):

- **Double majors**
- > unique combinations: 708                      > combinations with 1 student: 442
- **Triple majors**
- > unique combinations: 35                      > combinations with 1 student: 33
- **Majors & Minors\***
- > unique combinations: 1912                      > combinations with 1 student: 1102
- *(any student with more than one major-minor combo is counted as a separate combination)*
  
- *Next steps/comments:* Refer to Transformative Student Experience; this may connect to their discussion of changing the advising model.
  
- **Design a unified branding and marketing process to increase national and international visibility.**
  - *Recommendation:* Develop a marketing approach that is integrated (involve ALL appropriate units), aggressive and innovative. Consider a bold approach that does something that has never before been tried by Miami – and investment in a campaign that is spearheaded by Miami alums and nationally-renowned marketing experts who can connect the institution with a leader in marketing and PR.
  - *Brief Rationale:* Assertively tell Miami’s story, focusing on the successes of students, faculty, alumni and outstanding programs (curricular and co-curricular). This should include a campaign that can be used to recruit new students, to elevate our peer reputation, to unify alums and instill pride to support the campaign, and to elevate the Miami brand broadly and globally. For example, as part of an intrusive marketing plan, could we start a campaign with the smaller M pins and ask alumni to wear their pins on Miami Mondays? We hear doctors are always wearing pins of their alma maters. Why don’t we ask our alums to outwardly show their Miami pride? Could we then have them curate video messages at their workplace to share how Miami prepared them for a successful career? This could elevate Miami’s brand and invigorate energy on the alumni side, but also be used with prospective students and in the Career Center to connect and engage alumni and tell Miami success stories.
  - *Next steps/comments:* This is beyond the charge of subcommittees and is a recommendation to the Implementation Committee.

**Strategy #3:** *Improve our ranking - develop and implement strategies and tactics to intentionally improve select rating criteria that we can impact.*

- **Target specific aspects of the USN&WR rankings that we can influence, and develop strategies to improve the rankings.**
  - *Recommendation:* Identify and focus on the ranking areas that we can influence and make appropriate changes. Publicize the strategic initiatives (when developed) to increase national and international prominence (criterion 3).
  - *Brief Rationale:* Other universities have done this with some measure of success. This should be a high priority, as our current ranking is in the high 90s. EMSS reports that if we fall out of the top 100, we will attract even fewer international students. A few suggestions from Mike Crowder:
    - Class size - could we get LLC activities listed as courses? It is a way to “tweak” the system in a way that we can live with.

- Alumni - targeting the alumni in the two years that are counted – if we could get >50% to give even \$20-\$50, it would help with this item.
    - We need to figure out criterion 1c. (Graduate rate performance (8%)), and address it if we can. Susan Schaurer pays very close attention to rankings and the metrics as part of her position as associate vice president for Strategic Enrollment Management & Marketing. Her suggestions include:
      - Pell recipients: new and aspirational activities related to support, retention and graduation of Pell recipients
      - Testing: Miami could change requirements and become “test optional.” See Appendix A for Susan’s detailed comments.
  - *Next steps/comments:* EMSS and other appropriate units should review efforts that target rankings and make some strategic decisions as soon as possible. Mike Crowder (Chemistry and Biochemistry) has also looked at this closely and could be another resource.
- **Support, recognize and publicize prominent Miami faculty, staff and students.**
  - *Recommendation:* We need an aggressive marketing campaign, targeting different audiences and assertively marketing faculty and staff experts as consultants. Develop and maintain a faculty expert directory that is accessible and searchable. (criterion 3).
  - *Brief Rationale:* Expert opinion (both items are 20%) is a large percentage. Address this in two ways – publicizing our experts and what they do (push out), and developing and maintaining a faculty expert directory that is accessible and searchable (pull in). Other universities routinely and effectively market the members of their university to raise visibility. This effort must be the responsibility of a specific office or person at Miami and not be the responsibility of the faculty member or department chair. We need all data reported correctly (student, instructional and research spending) and we need to tell our stories to certain groups. \*Ongoing issues with data ownership and consistency may be addressed by the new Assistant Provost position if desired plans are realized.
  - *Next steps/comments:* These efforts specifically target the “expert opinion” rating, but should be part of a bold marketing campaign, as described in item 2d above.
- **Continue to improve student support.**
  - *Recommendation:* Support efforts designed to increase retention and graduation rate led by EMSS and in coordination with the academic divisions (criterion 1). Increase support for Pell Grant students (criterion 1).
  - *Brief Rationale:* The single biggest driver in the rankings is retention and graduation rates (22%) – while we are good, we need to excel at this one. We have some new tools that can help, if EMSS and Academic Affairs work cooperatively on this. Increasing the number of Pell Grant recipients and supporting them to increase their graduation rate would specifically target the criterion that directly affected our decrease in overall ranking. (Susan Schaurer has some specific ideas as mentioned above and described in Appendix A).
  - *Next steps/comments:* Transformative Student Experience can consider this recommendation. EMSS has begun initiatives in this area that should be supported, especially in improving retention.

## Metrics for assessing outcomes

*Diane's note: I don't believe this applies to our subcommittee, as we were tasked with making recommendations to the other subcommittees. I expressed at the planning meeting that we believe the role of the NU subcommittee is to make recommendations (with rationale and data, as applicable) that other subcommittees would then consider.*

**Recommendations for specific next steps in the planning process.**

We should utilize appropriate members of the National University subcommittee to assist the work of the other subcommittees in the strategic planning process. Like many of our challenges, the recommendations made by the National University issue have an important financial component and need to be supported through additional revenue sources, the capital campaign and the leadership of upper administration.

## **Appendix A**

(Suggestions provided by Susan Schaurer, Associate Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management & Marketing, EMSS)

### **New Pell Efforts**

Beginning in the AY19, EMSS began intentional efforts to better support Pell students and ensure their retention and timely degree completion. EMSS created tactics to better enhance communication with Pell students and support their financial literacy. Staff across the One Stop, Bursar's Office and Office of Student Financial Assistance began outreach with Pell students each semester to see if they had questions surrounding their bills and efforts were made to create and apply micro-grants and other scholarships to Pell students who had manageable gaps in aid and monies due to the university. In recent semesters, the Office of Student Financial Assistance has ensured that financial aid was available for Winter Term for Miami's neediest students to ensure they are having the ability to take part in a comprehensive Miami Experience like their peers.

### **Aspirational Pell Efforts**

If Miami wants to be a national leader in student success for Pell-eligible and low-income students, it would consider a model that takes an aggressive approach to ensuring the success of our lowest-income students and makes impressive aims at increasing greatly their retention and graduation rates. Programs that are seen as the national leaders and benchmarks across the US include full scholarships for these students (EFC and student loan). Currently, Miami has one need-based program (Miami Access Fellows) that only guarantees tuition. Most of these programs, in addition to paying for tuition and fees and room and board, provide a book stipend, computer or laptop program, as well as enrichment funds to allow the student to participate in study abroad, Greek life or some other element of the student experience, ultimately trying to increase student satisfaction and belonging. While Miami would face a challenge financially to be able to ensure this for every Pell-eligible student admitted to the university, it could and should consider a smaller, competitive-based cohort to start. Miami could establish a name for itself by pronouncing its commitment to these students and publicly establishing some lofty goals for the cohort – rates that exceed those for our current general population. Example rates would include – retention rate of 95%, graduation rate of 85% and placement rate of 99%. This would put Miami on the national stage for its commitment to student success, particularly for Pell-eligible students.

### **Rankings Bold Initiative**

In addition to the Pell initiative outlined above, Miami could take a bold step toward increasing its rankings in USNWR and its score on the test score of the incoming cohort. Schools that are test optional tend to see increases in their overall academic profile. This is due to the fact that schools must only submit test scores for the students who submit them as part of the admission process. This process naturally allows schools that are test optional to submit test scores only for a portion of the applicant pool that chose to submit scores – as they self-selected and saw themselves fitting an already high student profile. If Miami went test optional and retained its merit guarantee, we would likely see a boost in in our profile with students who fall within the grid and our admitted student profile, whereas students who feel outside the grid would likely not submit.