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## Regional campuses upgrading missions



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Guest Columnist

Almost 50 years ago, Miami University's Middletown and Hamilton campuses were established to provide affordable, open-access options for associate degrees and a pathway to bachelor's degrees in Oxford for area students bound by location, circumstance, or economics. This mission changed dramatically in 2008 with the formation of the University System of Ohio, in which the governor and the chancellor of the Ohio Board

of Regents directed that the state's regional campuses shift to offering primarily four-year bachelor's degrees with a particular emphasis on the educational needs and career opportunities in each campus's respective region.

This shift recognized that a system of complementary higher education institutions provides more and better options for students, that baccalaureate degrees are important to individual success, and that Ohio – which lags significantly in four-year degree attainment – needs a more educated work force in order to be competitive in a global marketplace.

As a result of this change, Miami University has been working to

evolve the structure and operations of our regional campuses to better meet and succeed at this new mission.

In 2010, we merged the regional campuses under one administrative function.

In 2013, an academic division was created on the regional campuses to allow more autonomy in creating four-year degrees that better meet the demands of both students and the region.

As a natural part of the progression, we are now involved in a process that will create further autonomy and allow the Miami Regionals to more fully embrace its mission as a flexible and highly accessible baccalaureate institution.

Last fall, I convened a

task force of faculty, staff and students – representative of all of Miami – to look at university models in Ohio and throughout the United States that might be applicable to the Miami context.

The task force identified alternative structures and strategies for fiscally viable growth in four-year degree programs at the regional campuses and presented options for clearly differentiating the Miami Regionals while maintaining a Miami identity.

Building on the report, and in keeping with Miami's core value of transparent and inclusive governance, a Process Committee was established to make final recommendations as a blueprint for the transformation of the

Regionals into campuses with a four-year institutional framework that will meet the needs of our region for the 21st century and beyond. This committee is tasked with engaging the broader communities, as well as the university, in discussions about the future of the Miami Regionals. I encourage interested individuals to attend the open forums and/or to submit their thoughts to the committee's website, [www.regionals.miamioh.edu/taskforce](http://www.regionals.miamioh.edu/taskforce). The committee will report its recommendations to the Miami University Senate on April 13, and I will submit final recommendations to the Board of Trustees at the May 1 meeting.

David Hodge is the president of Miami University.