



PennAHEAD
Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy

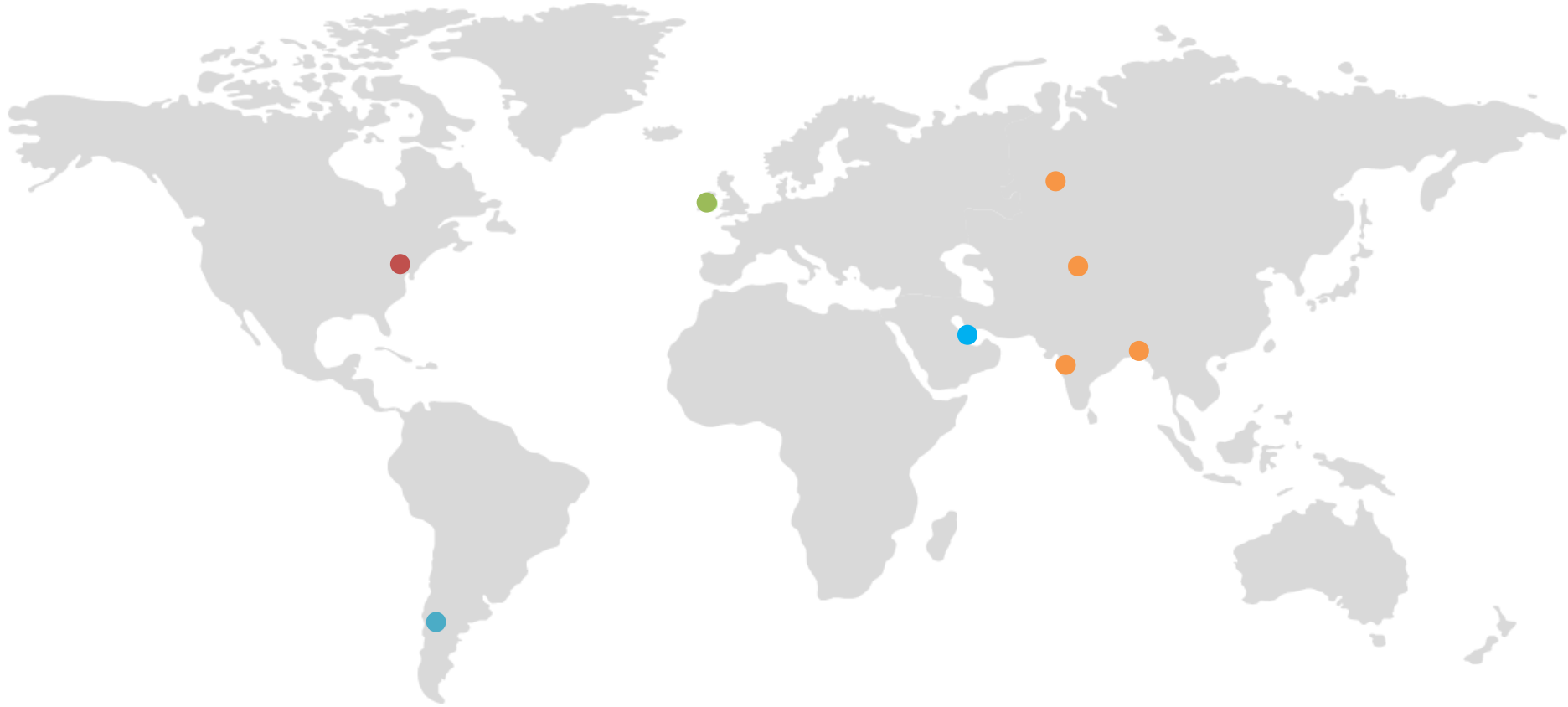
Institutions of Excellence: The Case of UMBC

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The Institutions of Excellence Project



North America

South America

Europe

Middle East

Asia

Who defines excellence?



What are alternative conceptions of excellence?



“Rankings gauge quality or high performance against a narrow set of criteria...[They] privilege wealth, selectivity, research productivity...for the vast majority of institutional leaders...they do not serve as a guide for how to improve the overall performance of a university. They are oblivious to the importance of organizational culture. They tend to ignore differences in mission”



The basic idea is that universities should be judged on how well they fulfill their mission or purpose

- Popular conceptions of World Class Universities and rankings structures flawed
- Do not offer pathways to excellence



UMBC

 PennAHEAD

Case Activity: Why UMBC?

Part 1: Discuss readings and a (variation on a) SWOT analysis (30 min)

- Each small group will discuss one of the pre-assigned materials. What was interesting? What did you learn about UMBC from it?
- Together generate a list on the white board of things we learned about the institution according to the following buckets : 1) Successes, 2) Challenges, 3) Values, 4) Unique Characteristics, 5) Need more info...

Break (5 min)

Part 2: Do a little more digging (30 min)

- In groups of 3-4, take about 30 minutes to investigate UMBC further. As group members find new/useful information or datapoints, add to White Board
- Return as large group and discuss new additions to board
- What does UMBC have to teaching us about institutional excellence? Why do you think we included UMBC in the book?

Break (5 min)

Our answer to "Why UMBC"...

- Initial interest in UMBC as a case
- Completed about 20 interviews with SLT, faculty, & staff at UMBC
- Key themes we identified from our case study (or what we learned from UMBC about pathways to excellence)
 - Value of longevity in leadership
 - Culture of strategic risk-taking, innovation & collaboration
 - Investment in distinctive aspects of mission & community
 - The power of "we"
 - Developing a change model that works & replicating it

Longevity in leadership



"the UMBC story is also about stability of leadership. The fact that Freeman has been here for 30 years, and he's such an amazing human being, has really allowed us to be this institution."

Name	Role	Years at UMBC
Freeman Hrabowski	President	30
Phillip Rous	Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs	29
Bill LaCourse	Dean of the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences	28
Greg Simmons	Vice President for Institutional Advancement	27
Pat McDermott	Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs	30
Lisa Akchin (IE)	Associate Vice President, Engagement	25
Lynne Schaefer (IE)	Vice President Administration and Finance	15
Janet Rutledge (ED)	Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School	19
Yvette Mozie-Ross (ED)	Vice Provost Enrollment Management and Planning	30 (UMBC alum)
Jack Suess (ED)	Vice President, Information Technology	40 (UMBC alum)

Culture of strategic risk-taking, innovation & collaboration

"What would it take for a predominantly white university to educate large numbers of students of color in STEM?"

*"they need to know that if it doesn't work out the way it should, the provost is not going to come, knock on their door and say "Why did you waste my \$10,000?"... **If you want innovation, you've got to lower the risk.** This is not about failure, it's about trying something then revising it."*



*"the fact that **shared governance leaders ended up becoming Deans, Provosts**, other people has really sort of **built a level of trust that allows you to actually take risks.** Because, in essence, higher ed, a lot of the limitations of risk is the fact that people don't trust you to go out on a limb for some in activities. And so you're more constrained in what you can do. So I think the positive, virtuous cycle that we've created, an emphasis on shared governance has really been one of those facilitators of being able to continue to take risks"*

Investment in distinctive aspects of mission & community



*"Our students tend to be very quirky, and **unapologetically quirky**. They are okay with being different, and I think it's that sense of self...**and the fact that you're at a place that welcomes and embraces who you are for whoever you are...** I just think it's being okay in who you are...I think it is an important character of students who do well here."*

*"We went from being this apologetic, kind of, you know, 'We're just UMBC. We're just this little regional campus,' to being unapologetic, embracing who we are...this is what we are and this is what we do and **we're very proud of it. And it's not a secret.** I remember at one point people used to call us 'The best kept little secret,' you know. I think **we just grew up and matured and just stood in our own and was unapologetic about it and felt good about it.**"*

bwtech@UMBC



The Power of 'We'

"When we were going through the Great Recession, I was hearing that my colleagues at other universities fighting and scraping for money. At UMBC the conversations were all 'What is best for the university?' So we all presented what would be the impact of a cut on our unit...and we made decisions about what is best for the university because we had to have cuts in order to keep doing strategic investment. And **there wasn't a lot of fighting about it. People said 'This is the right thing to do and we want to do it together.'** Everyone had an opportunity to be heard. And, yes, **some people were cut more than others, and they said, 'I understand why we have to do that.'** "

"We have worked very hard over the years to become cohesive, to develop a shared vision for what we want to do and to rise about our unit priorities—to think about the institution as a whole. **It doesn't mean we don't disagree. We do. But I always feel like everybody's pulling in the same direction.** "

"there was a **very clear sense of the greater good...even in budget talks**, where are the most cantankerous of all. There was a sense of 'What do we allocate funds to as a group of people that is for the greater good? For our students? For our university? For our faculty?' It wasn't, 'Well, I want this for my little silo, and if I don't get it, then...' It was a very different discussion than I had ever heard...And everybody was okay with that."

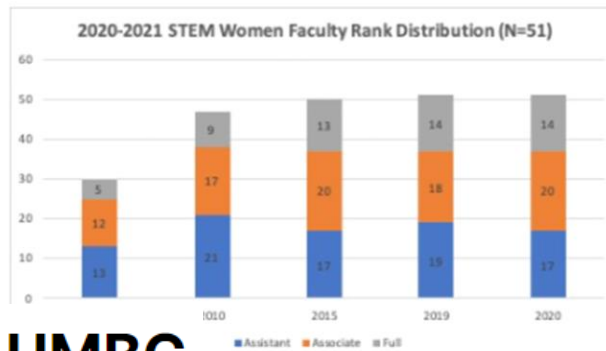
Developing a change model that works & replicating it

"that approach [Hrabowski] took with creating the Meyerhoff at first—over here and protected—and then building that out to become the thing that UMBC was known for, allowed him to begin to make changes across the campus...And I just watched him over the decades making these moves...he kept taking the Meyerhoff model and empowering people like me and others to then [ask] 'What will we do with it in this area? And what would we do with it in that area?'"

Women in STEM Faculty Data

Since 2003:

- The number of women tenure-track faculty in STEM has increased 70%!
- Women Full Professors have increased by 180%!



ADVANCE at UMBC

WISE Women



Dr. Tulay Adali
Professor, Computer Science and Electrical Engineering



Dr. Anita Komlodi
Associate Professor, Information Systems



Dr. Dawn Biehler
Associate Professor, Geography and Environmental Systems



Dr. Weihong Lin
Professor, Biological Sciences



Dr. Kathleen Hoffman
Professor, Mathematics and Statistics
Associate Dean of CNMS



Dr. Hua Lu
Professor, Biological Science



Dr. Suzanne Ostrand-Rosenberg
Professor Emerita, Biological Sciences



Dr. Sreedevi Sampath
Associate Professor, Information Systems

Discussion

- What concepts from readings you've engaged for this course do you see present in this case?
- How does UMBC compare to other institutions you've looked at?
- What questions/wonderings does the case of UMBC raise for you?