

INTRODUCTION

The University of Central Arkansas has seen a great deal of change in the eight years since the 1998 Campus Master Plan was completed. The Russ/Brewer-Hegeman/Reynolds complex has been completed, as has the first phase of the HPER Center. New residence halls have been built and the campus has been expanded through the acquisition of outlying properties like Bear Village. Most notably, UCA has grown from roughly 9,000 students in 1998 to a total head count of 11,300 in 2006.

Predictably, this growth has exacerbated some of the problems the University was dealing with in 1998 - a lack of instructional and administrative space, too few modern residential facilities, poor circulation, parking shortages and an ambiguous relationship with the City of Conway, among others. And, even as UCA moves to address some of these issues, continuing growth and other changes such as the athletic department's move to NCAA Division I status threaten to overwhelm the gains made in the recent past.

The University has not been idle in the face of change. A significant step was taken in early 2004 with the adoption of the UCA Strategic Framework, the strategic plan which will serve as the basis for all planning -- physical, academic and more -- at the University. The Plan sets forth seven strategic goals and a large number of objectives, almost all of which inform the Campus Master Plan in some measure. Together, they set forth a vision for excellence which this document is intended to help carry out.

Other planning efforts grew from the Strategic Framework and were specifically directed at



accommodating anticipated growth. The most significant effort involved creation of the Centennial Plan, which outlined \$100 million in academic building projects slated to coincide with celebration of UCA's centennial anniversary in 2007. The Centennial Plan, which calls for construction of six new facilities along with substantial renovation of three others, poses several immediate challenges for the University. Where should the new facilities be located? How will they affect the existing campus? What sort of supporting facilities (parking, service, open space) will they require?

While many of the issues UCA faces are specific to this campus, the University is also affected by

several national trends which have emerged since the completion of the 1998 Plan. One of the more notable is the sustainability movement, which promises to change not only the way we construct buildings but entire campuses, ensuring that each generation preserves adequate resources for the next.

In order to ensure that these and other pressing issues will continue to be addressed in a thoughtful manner, the University began the process of updating the Campus Master Plan in early 2005. For the next year, the University's Master Plan Committee and the consulting planners met with a wide representation of the UCA community, first to explore ambitions and expectations and later to share and review options for the future of the campus. In addition to a well-attended series of forums open to all students, faculty and staff, the planning team interviewed numerous small groups and individuals in order to gain the fullest possible understanding of the institution.

As the outlines of the Campus Master Plan Update began to emerge, it became clear that the potential for continuing rapid growth was so great that any responsible look into the future would need to see well beyond the challenges of the moment. It is highly likely that UCA will hit the 12,000-student mark (measured in "full-time equivalent" students, or fte) within the relatively near future. Since that number turned out to approach the maximum number of students who could be accommodated on the existing campus without making several substantial adjustments to the way the campus is used, that number and the facilities necessary to support it became an early planning target for the update.

Since the University is unlikely to stop growing when it reaches that point, though, a second plan which looks at the changes UCA will need to make as it matures was explored. The student population chosen for the second plan, 15,000 fte, although somewhat more arbitrary than the 12,000 target in the first plan, is still well within the realm of reason and may even seem short-sighted some day. The true benefit of this plan, however, lies in the insights it has into the adaptations the University will need to embrace as it continues to grow.

It is important to note that the Campus Master Plan Update is designed not just to supplement the 1998 plan, but to replace it. When elements of the original plan were found to retain their relevance, they were included in this document so that it can stand alone as the University's sole master planning vehicle.

The balance of this report describes the two plans which together form the Campus Master Plan Update. The next section, Section Three, updates the original assessment of the existing campus and compares it to the assessment made in 1998. Section Four is the updated Campus Master Plan, the bulk of the report. Finally, Section 5 re-emphasizes the campus design guidelines first formulated in 1998 in order to define and encourage adaptation of the "UCA Style" of building and campus design.

CAMPUS ASSESSMENT

As in 1998, the early portion of the planning process included a careful look at the existing campus, focusing on its primary resources as well as any long-range concerns which could adversely affect the school in the future. Not surprisingly, most of the qualities and places identified as irreplaceable resources in 1998 were still judged to be vital to the campus in 2006. The list of concerns, meanwhile, had grown, illustrating the importance of careful planning and disciplined growth in the future.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

The University of Central Arkansas campus has a number of attributes which help give significant portions of it a timeless, collegiate quality. These important features should be carefully guarded and strengthened, even emulated where applicable. The most important campus resource UCA has is its compact, walkable core. The benefits of this pattern range from reduced infrastructure costs to a distinctly collegiate atmosphere that is very attractive to visitors and prospective students. Other important campus resources include:

- ☛ A consistent architectural style in the core of the campus (the UCA style).
- ☛ The Moore Nature Preserve and other open spaces located in close proximity to the center of campus.

UCA has another important resource it didn't have in 1998; the opportunity to create new public faces in two critical areas. Acquisition of property along the southern and eastern edges of campus and the subsequent development of new athletic and academic facilities will dramatically affect the University's image.

Many of the campus' most enduring attributes - the compact core, the broad lawn along Donaghey Avenue - were evident in this photo taken in 1950



- ☛ The broad front lawn and original Donaghey Avenue entrance.
- ☛ Two heavily-used, universally-acknowledged centers, one symbolic and historic (Alumni Circle) and the other the functional heart of the campus (the Student Union plaza).

LONG-RANGE CONCERNS

Many of the same concerns listed in the 1998 Master Plan are still valid in 2006. While the University has taken modest steps to address some, it has not yet managed to tackle others at all. And other, newer concerns have emerged since 1998. Taken together, they constitute a very real threat to the integrity of the campus. Many of the plan-

ning principles and elements contained in the next section were formulated specifically to address these concerns.

☛ Newer development is inconsistent with the older, core campus. Rather than follow the collegiate prototypes found in the core campus, designers have often resorted to suburban commercial building types, details and site development. Evidence of this concern can be seen in such buildings as the Russ/Brewer-Hegeman/Reynolds complex. While the individual elements of this complex are quite attractive, its sheer bulk and relative isolation make it draw apart from rather than complement the rest of the campus.

By 1960, the campus was beginning to show signs of sprawl and inconsistent planning

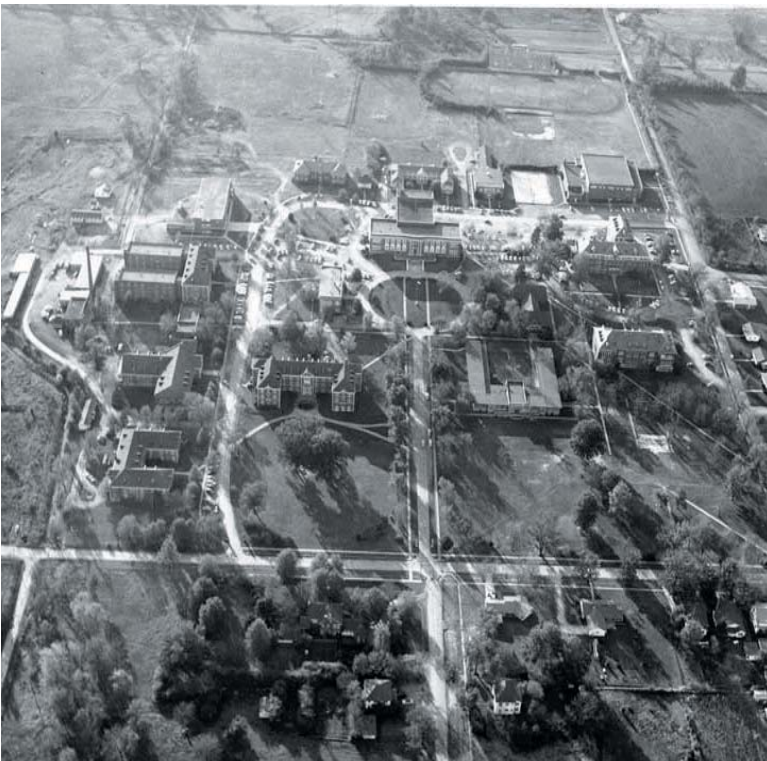
☛ While individual buildings or structures have been generally well-designed, there is still little care given to how and where they are

sited, how they relate to other buildings on campus or the configuration and quality of the outdoor spaces they form. In addition to the Russ/Brewer-Hegeman/Reynolds complex mentioned earlier, the siting and site design for Thompson Hall and the Harding Fountain unfortunately constitute a number of missed opportunities.

☛ While there have been some notable successes in the effort to combat sprawl and inefficient, leapfrog development (building Thompson Hall on the site of the old administration building, for example), much work remains. It will be especially important to guard against sprawl as the University continues to acquire land on its periphery. Developments such as Bear Village serve a valuable purpose but are only tenuously connected to the rest of the campus.

☛ Vehicular circulation remains indirect and disjointed, with little thought given to traffic flow on campus or how it should be coordinated with other campus uses. The lack of a logical internal road system is a significant impediment to proper development of the southern portions of the campus.

☛ Except in the very center of campus, pedestrian circulation remains even more difficult and unpleasant than vehicular circulation. Two primary problems persist; a lack of safe and attractive routes from parking areas to the core campus and, as more students live off-campus, safely getting from those areas to UCA's property.



- ❖ Parking is, if anything, even more scattered and unorganized than in 1998. Parking will continue to be a main determinant of campus land use and design as the school's population grows. UCA's response to the questions of when, where and how to begin building structured parking will be among the most momentous to be made in the future.

- ❖ Although it continues to acquire property, the University does not exhibit a clear vision for the areas around the periphery of the campus. This was true of the area north of Bruce Street in 1998 and still holds true there as well as in the newly-acquired residential properties to the south and east.