Presidential Report 2003

The word zoom aptly describes the powerful momentum that drives the University of Hartford. By virtually all measures, in 2002–03 our University had one of its best years ever. An increasing number of students applied — 113 percent more than just five years ago — as the percentage of students admitted declined, evidence that we have become much more selective. As one indication, average combined SAT scores for our entering class of baccalaureate candidates continued to surpass the national average and were 10 points higher than two years ago. Our students are increasingly more qualified to handle the challenging work of freshman year.

Our strong performance in admissions has a positive effect on other aspects of the University’s status and reputation. As a result of increased enrollment, we have held tuition increases to 4 percent annually over the past five years. During this same period, our tuition revenue has increased dramatically, which has protected us from the consequences of a negative investment environment and helped us turn a $2.4 million accumulated deficit into a $4 million reserve fund.

Getting Noticed

Such performance is bringing us more positive attention. In August, for example, The Chronicle of Higher Education, in a full-page story on the University, noted our financial turnaround and stability, highlighting our focus on admissions marketing, the elimination of the deficit, our net tuition increase, and the consequent upgrade in our bond rating by Moody’s Investor Services. We also solidified our ranking in the third tier in the annual U.S. News & World Report survey, a highly competitive national category among universities that offer doctoral degrees. Reputation typically follows reality by about a decade, but in our University’s case, the process is accelerating.

We do have momentum, and that gives us the confidence to build for the future. We are in the “quiet” phase of our campaign to develop a new Integrated Science, Engineering, and Technology (ISET) complex. ISET will bring together students from our new College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture with students from the physical sciences programs of Arts and Sciences as well as from our health professions. This interdisciplinary approach to education will be a strong point of distinction for the University. More than three-quarters of the cost of the project will be financed by tax-exempt bonds issued on behalf of the University by Connecticut Health & Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA), but we still need to raise $7 million from private sources. Bart Shuldman ’79, an alumnus of the College of Engineering and CEO of TransAct Technologies, has agreed to chair the ISET Campaign Leadership Committee. Highlights from the schools and colleges as well as profiles of Bart and other alumni begin on page 8 of this report.

Based on our successful experience with the University of Hartford Magnet School, as well as our reputation for science, math, engineering, and technology education, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, through the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, awarded the University a $400,000 planning grant to develop an early-college magnet high school, planned to be on our campus. To be known as the University High School of Science and Engineering, this school will provide university learning
experiences for high school students, enabling them to get college credit, and will involve University faculty with students at the high school level. We expect that some of these students will come to the University after their high school graduations.

Alumni Support Is Critical
As we approach the optimal size for our undergraduate student body, most of our top-line financial growth in the future is not likely to come from tuition revenue but rather from loyal and generous alumni and friends. We continued to build fund-raising momentum last year, receiving $12.5 million in gifts and pledges.

We added more than 1,000 new donors to our list of contributors, most of them via a strong student telefund. This raised our percentage of alumni giving from around 7 percent to nearly 11 percent, still low by comparison to our peer schools. Alumni contribute to their alma mater for many reasons, including a sense of obligation, the ability to make a difference, and strong positive feelings about higher education’s contribution to society. Gifts from alumni are an important component of ratings by such groups as U.S. News & World Report, but more important, alumni support has a halo effect on the University’s overall reputation. We intend to reach an alumni giving rate of 20 percent over the coming three years.

We announced a number of significant gifts last year, chief among them the generous $1 million pledge to the Performing Arts Center campaign from longtime friends of the University, Irma and Mort Handel (Hon. ’02). Arts and Sciences alumnus Dick Cardin ’62 designated $500,000 at the end of the fiscal year for faculty development in the humanities as well as an Honors Program. Like Mort, Dick is a regent of the University, and he is also the newly named chairman of the University’s Campaign of Commitment Steering Committee. Irma, Mort, Dick, and our other donors are confident investors in the future of the University of Hartford, and they set wonderful standards for all of us to follow.

A Home Field Advantage
It was an exciting year in athletics, highlighted by our women’s soccer team’s America East championship and NCAA College Cup appearance. Following the women’s basketball team’s miraculous ride in 2002, the University again hosted the America East Women’s Basketball Championship in March, bringing thousands of fans from cities throughout the Northeast to our campus. The men’s basketball team set a school record by winning 11 of 12 home games and demonstrating that our Chase Family Arena is a terrific venue for fans and players alike.

We need to provide a similar level of quality for our other teams, especially the outdoor sports. That is why we kicked off a $10 million campaign called “A Home Field Advantage” last year, under the leadership of alumni Bob Forrester ’66 and Gary LaRocque ’75, to build new baseball and softball fields, a track and field venue, and a refurbished soccer field. Currently, our baseball and track and field teams do not host games on campus, a condition that denies our athletes the fan support of their fellow students. We compete at the NCAA’s highest level, Division I, and our student-athletes deserve better. Our goal is to provide first-rate outdoor facilities for our student-athletes of the future.
A Whole New U

If you haven’t visited the University in a few years, you will be surprised. Modern signage, revised roadway patterns, and improvements in landscaping and building interiors and exteriors have shown off the University to the thousands of visitors drawn to the campus last year by such personalities as Art Garfunkel, Paul Matisse (the grandson of the famous artist), National Public Radio’s Nina Totenberg, Wynton Marsalis, Dean Kamen (inventor of the Segway™ Human Transporter), ABC’s “Good Morning America” host Charles Gibson, and renowned photographer Arnold Newman. We expect tens of thousands of visitors to the campus between February 6 and May 16, 2004, when the University hosts “American Originals: Treasures from the National Archives.” The exhibition in Hartford is made possible by United Technologies Corporation. We are the only university, the only New England venue, and the last stop for this three-year, national tour of famous American documents, including a four-day viewing of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. It is a fine opportunity for our alumni and others to return to campus to see how far we have come. We do have great momentum and a bright future.

Walter Harrison