



Drake University 2012
Draft: April 2007

Drake University's aspiration is to be recognized as one of the very best institutions of higher education in the United States.

Drake University's distinctive focus on the integration of the best of liberal arts & sciences education with professional preparation – grounded in an intensely interactive and collaborative environment – is a powerful model for the nation's higher education community in addressing the learning and developmental needs of students, meeting society's needs for expertise and an engaged citizenry, and in resolving the many challenges currently confronting higher education. *Already acknowledged as the top institution of our kind in the Midwest,¹ our goal, simply put, is to become – within five to six years – a national model for excellence, effectiveness, innovation, accessibility and accountability in higher education.*

To realize that aspiration, we must define for ourselves – in a manner consistent with our institutional history, mission and core values – what the defining characteristics of “one of the very best institutions of higher education in the United States” are. What *is* it, precisely, that will make Drake University one of the very best? Traditionally, evaluations of institutional quality in higher education have focused on inputs, both quantitative (median SAT/ACT scores, alumni giving, spending per student, endowment per student) and subjective (“peer assessment”), but those inputs cannot be tied directly to either institutional mission or educational outcomes.

It would seem, in articulating our goal to be one of the very best in the midst of growing national dissatisfaction with many aspects of higher education, that we have an important opportunity to realign the discussion – both for ourselves, and for higher education as a whole. We have the opportunity to define and articulate what we believe must be the essential characteristics of a university that fulfills its responsibilities to all of its constituencies, and to identify the specific ways in which Drake University can excel in each of these areas in a manner that derives from our mission.

¹ Master's (L); Fall 2006 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings

As a catalyst for discussion as we enter into the University's planning process, I would suggest the elements of our definition of "one of the very best" include the following:

- *Drake is a national model for the true integration of liberal learning and professional education, and for interdisciplinary approaches to learning;*
- *Drake University is a national model for learning/living environments in higher education;*
- *Drake University is a national model for global education;*
- *Drake University is a national model for measurable outcomes, and for full transparency and communication of outcomes, operations and decision-making (as appropriate in the context of legal and privacy issues);*
- *Drake University is a national model for life-long learning opportunities;*
- *Drake University is national model for financial accessibility for students and their parents;*
- *Drake University is a national model for the integration of academic and athletic success, and for its recreation and wellness programs;*
- *Drake University is a national model for efficient, effective, and responsive administrative practices.*
- *Drake University has the resources to achieve and sustain these goals.*