

## INTRODUCTION

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This year marked the eighth annual research policy retreat hosted by the Merrill Center in Valley Falls, Kansas. The 2004 topic was: *Riding the Momentum of Research: Leadership Challenges in Public Research Universities*. The research mission of public universities is a dynamic, ever-changing, and increasingly expensive enterprise. The momentum is driven by scientific initiatives that, by their very nature, are difficult to predict, can develop quickly, may persist for years or may have a short time of prominence, and require significant resources in the form of faculty expertise, funding, and physical space. The leadership of a comprehensive public university must accommodate the fluid nature of scientific initiatives to the world of long-term planning for the teaching and service missions of the universities. The policy retreat focused on how to meet the leadership challenges, by noting the ways that success has been achieved, and by considering ways to leverage the available resources across the universities in the region. The meeting ended with a call for evaluation of regional resources and the development of a Presidents' Plan for Faculty and Facility Coordination across universities. This regional initiative could significantly advance the funding potential for each research institution in the four-state partnership. The plan is being discussed as this publication goes to press

Twenty senior administrators and faculty attended from the four heartland states – Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska. Mary Sue Coleman, our keynote speaker, talked about the University of Michigan's success in attracting major investments for research facilities. Three other chancellors attended and gave presentations: Robert Hemenway (University of Kansas), Harvey Perlman (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) and Jon Wefald (Kansas State University), as well as David Shulenburg (KU Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor – Lawrence), and Barbara Atkinson (incoming Executive Vice Chancellor – KU Medical Center). Keith Yehle, Legislative Director for Senator Pat Roberts, is also a regular attendee.

The 2004 topic built on discussions at the eight previous retreats in the Merrill series *The Research Mission of Public Universities*. Our benefactors, Virginia and Fred Merrill, to whom we are deeply appreciative, support these conferences. The inaugural event in 1997 focused on pressures that hinder the research mission of higher education. In 1998, we turned our attention to competing for new resources, and ways to enhance individual and collective

productivity. Michael Crow, our keynote speaker that year, encouraged us to identify niche areas for research focus, under the premise that it was most promising to do selective areas of investigation at the highest levels of excellence. In 1999, we examined in more depth cross-university alliances. Keynote speaker Luis Proenza encouraged participants to think in terms of “strategic intent” and he highlighted important precedents in university-industry cooperation as well as links between institutions. In 2000, we focused on making research a part of the public agenda. We heard from George Walker who encouraged us to meet the needs of our state citizens, business leaders and students who are quite able to “carry our water” and champion the cause of research as a valuable state resource. In 2001, Joan Lorden brought to the table her experience with the topic of evaluating research productivity. She provided a valuable overview of key elements to consider when selecting measures for evaluating performance, with a focus on the very important National Research Council (NRC) study from 1995. Our keynote speaker in 2002 was Martin Apple, President of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents. In light of 9/11, he proposed unique ways that universities can lend expertise on bioterrorism, while at the same time remaining faithful to the task of generating new knowledge that can lead to societal benefits such as better health and sustainable energy sources. In 2003, we focused on graduate education and invited two keynote speakers who provided views from the top leadership levels in the U.S. and Canada. Debra Stewart, President of the Council of Graduate Schools, spoke about challenges to graduate education in light of the push for curriculum reform, budget cuts, and new rules on immigration. Martha Crago, President of the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, gave an update on initiatives in Canada, and offered her insights on how to build programs for the future during hard times, based on her experience as an administrator at McGill University. Both speakers addressed key issues about retention of students in the doctoral track, efficiency in time to degree, and making the rules of the game transparent.

As always, the pages of the Merrill white paper reveal many fascinating perspectives, and a frank examination of the complex issues faced by research administrators and scientists every day. It is with pleasure that I encourage you to read the papers from the 2004 Merrill policy retreat on *Riding the Momentum of Research: Leadership Challenges in Public Research Universities*.