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Bellarmine to unveil new vision of growth

Plans call for more schools, students

By **Nancy C. Rodriguez**
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The Courier-Journal

Bellarmine University wants to triple its enrollment and potentially add new schools of law, architecture, pharmacy and veterinary medicine by 2020.

President Joseph McGowan will formally announce tomorrow a proposal that calls for the private, Catholic university to become Kentucky's equivalent of universities like Notre Dame, Vanderbilt and Emory.

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"Bellarmine re-imagined," said McGowan, who aims to solidify his institution's role as one of the South's premier independent Catholic universities.

To get there the university is examining:

Raising enrollment from 2,500 to 8,000.

Doubling facilities to 60, mostly on its 135-acre

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BELLARMINE GOALS

Bellarmine University is exploring a 14-year vision for its future.

Current
Bellarmine College (Arts & Sciences)
W. Fielding Rubel School of Business
Annesley Frazier Thornton School of Education
Donna and Allan Lansing School of Nursing and Health Sciences
School of Continuing and Professional Studies

Enrollment: 2,500
Residents: 680
Budget: \$52 million
Endowment: \$20 million

2006-2010
School of Communications, Media and Culture
Graduate School of Management
Enrollment: 4,500
Residents: 1,000
Budget: \$150 million
Endowment: \$100 million

2011-2015
School of Pharmacy
School of Visual and Performing Arts

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campus on Newburg Road.

Offering 10 doctoral degrees per year in at least three disciplines.

Expanding sports facilities and studying a move to NCAA Division I from the current Division II. The university's lacrosse team is already in Division I.

Adding as many as seven new schools to the five it has now,

including schools of communications, law, architecture, pharmacy and veterinary medicine.

University officials still are mapping the specifics of the proposal, which would be paid for through capital campaigns, naming opportunities, donors and increased enrollment. Tuition -- which currently is \$24,150 a year -- is not expected to rise to cover the costs.

"This is not an announcement that we would do any of these schools, but we would study each of these schools," McGowan said. "This is the dream to which we will reach as we go forward."

Some of the expansion already is under way, such as the Owsley B. Frazier Stadium, which broke ground last week and could be completed this fall, and the university's establishment last month of a school to direct its 10 graduate programs.

McGowan also has appointed former Courier-Journal publisher Ed Manassah to serve as an executive in residence to help create a School of Communication, Mass Media and Culture.

'Unchartered ground'

Bellarmine officials say their proposal will benefit the city, region and state -- bringing in revenue and brain power, helping Kentucky increase the number of college-educated workers and promoting teamwork with the state's public and private higher-education institutions.

"In many ways, it's unchartered ground," said Tony Pals, public information director for the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C. "We simply don't know of a private institution that has

School of Hotel, Food and Beverage Industry Management
Enrollment: 6,000
Residents: 1,500
Budget: \$300 million
Endowment: \$200 million

2016-2020
 School of Law
 School of Architecture
 School of Veterinary Medicine
Enrollment: 8,000
Residents: 2,000
Budget: \$400 million
Endowment: \$400 million

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undertaken such an initiative to transform itself."

While some faculty question whether it is possible, the proposal has energized the campus, said Gail Henson, chairwoman of the university's communications department.

"It's pushing people. It's exciting people. It's making people ask tough questions about how high can we reach?" said Henson, who has worked at Bellarmine since 1985.

University officials met last week with neighbors to discuss its ideas, some of whom worry about parking, traffic and the effect on their neighborhoods, said Mary Garry, president of the Belknap Neighborhood Association.

"We don't dislike Bellarmine. We don't dislike students," she said. "But we don't want to change the character of our neighborhood, either."

'Grown by leaps and bounds'

Dennis Ogbe, a senior majoring in business administration who plans to enter the university's MBA program, believes the vision will become a full-fledged plan if it gets strong support from students, faculty and alumni.

"Many people will look at it like it's going to be impossible. But if you trace the history of Bellarmine, until now we have grown by leaps and bounds, and we are still growing," said Ogbe, who is from Nigeria.

Freshmen Marie Huth, Mallory Brake and Suzanne Shelburne, who attended the stadium groundbreaking last week, also are enthusiastic.

"I think as the campus expands it will increase enrollment, and then it just brings the community together a lot more," said Huth, who is from Cincinnati. "I'm so excited to see what this place is going to look like years from now."

But expanding won't be easy. Private schools don't get state funding.

"So they usually face more financial challenges from year to year," Pals said. "That does require their leaders to be innovative, flexible and market-smart."

McGowan's vision calls for the school to increase its budget from \$52 million to \$400 million by 2020. Endowments would increase from \$20 million to \$400 million.

"It's going to be a huge undertaking," acknowledged Bill Samuels Jr., CEO of Maker's Mark Distillery and chairman of the Bellarmine trustee board. "But I think we've got a good chance," he said, noting the growth of the Bellarmine name and McGowan's strong leadership.

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Much of the university's "Vision 2020" plan is based on reports produced in the past several years that say the economic health of metro Louisville and Kentucky depend on growing an educated work force.

The state's Council on Postsecondary Education estimates the Kentucky will need almost 800,000 college graduates by 2020 to meet the national average. It has about 402,000 now.

To meet that goal, Kentucky's private institutions must increase their enrollment and degree production by 50 percent, said Jim Applegate, the council's vice president of academic affairs.

Bellarmino's proposal "is the kind of bold growth we need from both the private and public sectors to achieve our state goals," he said.

Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson said the university's growth would have a "tremendous ripple effect," bringing more educated workers, faculty and education opportunities into the community.

Some of the programs Bellarmine is looking to add already exist at public institutions such as the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky. For example, U of L has a law school and UK has a law school, pharmacy program and a pre-veterinary program.

McGowan said Bellarmine isn't trying to directly compete with public institutions.

"But I would like to be as good as we possibly could be, and I think one of the benefits of that would be that it would raise the bar," he said.

A hill-based concept

McGowan said Bellarmine's growth would occur around the campus, mostly on the golf course. The idea is to use the university's location atop three hills to create a campus based on the hill towns and monasteries of Tuscany, Italy, the home of the university's namesake, St. Robert Bellarmine.

The designs would incorporate arches, cloisters, water features and gardens, and art.

McGowan acknowledged there will be challenges, but given all that Bellarmine has accomplished already, he is confident the university will achieve much more.

"The past is only prologue to what we want to do," he said. "It's this opportunity we have not to rest on our laurels, but to go forward and serve this region and this country."

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