

Miami regional campus changes may start in '15

OXFORD — A task force charged with examining the future of Miami University's regional campuses has recommended a series of changes to the regional system in a report out today.

Starting as early as next year, university leaders will revamp Miami's open enrollment colleges, located in Hamilton, Middletown and West Chester. A group of university professors and students spent the past two months researching 20 regional campus systems models across the country.

The report suggests the campuses should consider a new name for the regional system, directly refer students who are denied admission at the Oxford campus to a regional

location, brand the campuses separately and offer more bachelor's degrees — including ones in traditional studies such as English and biology.

"At the same time, capturing the distinct personality of each campus, while remaining quintessentially 'Miami' is also extremely important," the report reads.

The task force hopes the regional campuses will award more four-year degrees, said Maria Cronley, the group's co-chair and a business professor at Miami University's Oxford campus.

"We need to make sure we're paying attention and responsive to the needs in the region and the kind of degrees they want," Cronley said. "We have heard they want degrees in a wide variety of areas."

Task force members also recommended some things stay the same at the regional campuses, including keeping the regional campuses accredited with the Oxford campus.

"I hope people will read it and walk away feeling like the sky isn't falling," Taylor said. "Yes, there will be some changes, and some of those changes are needed."

Some of those changes are ideas students might embrace, said Jaree Naqvi, Miami University Hamilton's student government president. The report recommends university officials invest more time, resources and even scholarships to help students who want to relocate from the regional campus to the Oxford one, for example.

But the report still lays out a number of proposed changes that could be controversial, if adopted.

One recommendation suggests designating the

campuses as the "Miami Regional System" or "Miami Regional Campus" as well considering new school colors, logos and mascots for the satellite locations. Another recommends incoming professors should be hired through the regional campuses and only teach there, not at Oxford. And, the report suggests a notation on diplomas and transcripts to discern at which campus the degree was earned.

"I think the notation is really unnecessary," said Naqvi, adding that he doesn't understand why the university had a campaign last year to promote the term "I am Miami" at all of the college's campuses if they wanted to distinguish the locations from one another.

"How can we have that if you're changing our mascot, changing our colors and changing our degree?" Naqvi said.

Another recommendation includes putting a tighter cap on the number of credit hours a regional student can take on the Oxford campus while still paying the lower rate. Currently, an Ohio resident pays at least \$13,000 to attend the Oxford campus but would only pay between \$2,500 and \$4,000 to take full-time classes in Middletown or Hamilton.

The university's trustees will hear more about the report during a public meeting scheduled for 9 a.m. Dec. 5.

Naqvi said he plans to set out booths and talk with students to let them know about potential changes at the campus and the report's findings.