

## Identifying Issues Study Aid

**Exercise 1:** Use the following to answer the questions below:

**Email 1:** *The following email was sent by a Vice President of the University to all staff and faculty and some number of students in 2004. Such emails are on occasion sent when the University seeks help in urging favorable action on the University budget.*

“Subject: UM Community: Interested in Cutting Your Commute Time?”

“Help UM keep project planning money in the capital budget to study a direct, limited access road between the beltway, I-95 and the campus. The goal of the planning study would be to work with the community to explore options for vehicle and transit access to the campus. The proposed plan is the most effective way to reduce congestion in the area and impact on commuters.

“If the connector road is built, it would remove 11,000 car trips per day off Route 1. Those driving or using transit from Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George’s Counties, as well as the Baltimore region, would all benefit from shorter commute times, as would those traveling on local roads.

“We are committed to working with the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the community in the planning of this important road. As currently envisioned, the road would be an environmentally sensitive, limited access road, serving the University community.

“The State has allocated the planning money previously, but it is now in jeopardy. It is urgent that you go to [www.grassroots.umd.edu](http://www.grassroots.umd.edu) to email the key legislators and insist that this planning study move forward. It is easy to do and will take you only five minutes.

“Thank you for supporting this important University priority.”

**Email 2:** *The following email was received the next day. The note was sent to some number of staff and faculty who passed it along to others in a chain letter fashion. A copy of the email above appeared below the message below:*

“The University Administration has sent us this disingenuous e-mail urging us to contact our legislators for an 'important University priority' under the misleading heading of 'cutting commute time to campus'.

“In fact, they are asking us to support the inclusion in the capital budget of 1 million dollars to study the feasibility of a connector road between I-95 and campus that would most likely go right through the middle of the South Farm research lands in the Beltsville Agriculture Research Center (BARC). The feasibility of such a road has already been studied twice by the State Highway Administration (SHA) as a 2 lane road which would only have shuttle bus traffic between a garage off of I-95 and campus. In 2002, the cost estimate of building a busway only ranged from 51 million to 76 million dollars plus costs for upkeep. Phyllis Johnson, Area Director

of BARC (USDA) writes to the SHA that 'the 2002 study estimated a cost of \$57 M to build a bus way that might reduce traffic on Route 1 by 1 percent, clearly not a cost effective idea'.

“The e-mail from VP Porcari states 'we are committed to working with the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the community in the planning of this important road. As currently envisioned, the road would be an environmentally sensitive, limited access road, serving the University community.'

“In actual fact, the University has not worked with the community or BARC. Dr. Johnson of BARC is against the study, the Mayor and City Council of College Park are unanimously opposed to funding the study, the West College Park Civic Association is unanimous in its opposition, the PG County Council is against the study and the North College Park Citizens Association is against making the road anything more than a bus lane. The Delegates and Senator of the 47<sup>th</sup> District are unanimously opposed to this study as are the Delegates of the 21st District. Many community meetings have been held and the community is clear in its strong support against this road and the feasibility study.

“The idea of a four lane highway that is being built right through land belonging to BARC (a premier agriculture research center) as an 'environmentally sensitive' road is ridiculous. The PG Chapter of the Sierra Club has also testified strongly against studying this road., As Dr. Johnson points out in her letter BARC has 'long-term (multi-decade) research there, and a large proportion of the South Farm is plots with the best soil types at BARC, relocation of the research work would be extremely expensive, both in terms of funding needs and of lost or delayed research'.

“I find it hard to believe that the University of Maryland is interested in destroying a research institution in order to allow some of its community to have a 'faster commute to campus'.

“There are many other serious problems with funding this study and with an eventual road to campus, not the least of which is that it appears to be against the University's Master Plan which called for a more pedestrian campus, more green spaces and less cars with one or more Purple Line stops. It is hard to understand where the University is going to put these 11,000 cars a day they believe will be on the Connector Road instead of Route 1. Furthermore, nothing has been said about where this connector Road will end up. It is clear that local roads (Metzerott and Greenmeade) are insufficient to handle this volume of traffic. . .”

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of email 1? What is the purpose of email 2?
2. What is the thesis of email 1? What is the thesis of email 2?
3. What is the proposition that both emails are addressing?
4. What are the potential issues in this proposition?
5. What are the actual issues with the audience for these emails?
6. Evaluate email 1 in terms of these issues. Does it address the issues required?
7. Evaluate email 2 in terms of these issues. Does it address all the issues?

**Exercise 2:** Read the *Diamondback* editorial at:

<http://media.www.diamondbackonline.com/media/storage/paper873/news/2009/03/05/Opinion/Open-Endowments-3660260.shtml>

*Answer the following questions:*

1. What is the thesis of this editorial?
2. What are the potential issues for this thesis?
3. What are the actual issues that require support?
4. Evaluate the editorial's addressing these issues. Does it address the issues required?
5. What are the claims made for each issue addressed?
6. Are each of these claims supported?

**Exercise 3:** Read the speech at:

<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/obama/2009/03/09/president-obamas-speech-on-stem-cell-executive-order.html>

*Answer the following questions:*

1. What is the thesis of this speech?
2. Who is the target audience for this speech?
3. What are the potential issues for this thesis?
4. What are the actual issues that require support for this target audience?
5. Does this speech address the issues required?
6. What are the claims made for each issue addressed?
7. Are each of these claims supported?

**Exercises 2 and 3 can each be repeated on any editorial or speech content.**