I hope you’re still with me. If so, let me use the next five minutes to tell you why I think it is so important for the University to focus on how we plan for the next five years.

The University of Hartford—and colleges and universities all over the country—face very significant threats to our continued vibrancy, perhaps even our continued existence, unless we recognize them and adapt to them. Among those threats are the declining numbers of traditional-age, college-bound youth in the Northeast and their increasing reliance on financial aid; changing American attitudes toward the value and cost of higher education; and the explosion of people coming together in one geographic space to learn, and (b) it is relatively expensive to operate.

I know these are very general descriptions, threats, and goals, but many of us have been busy over the summer adapting them to the specific situations the University of Hartford faces. We’ll continue this activity—engaging as many faculty, staff, alumni, and students as we can—throughout the fall and winter, hoping to develop a comprehensive plan by the spring.

What will that plan consist of? It is far too soon to tell yet. But I will tell you what I, for one, think are the essential questions we should be asking ourselves:

1. How do we use the values, both moral and educational, that have traditionally characterized the University of Hartford and use them to help form a University that is more flexible and nimble in responding to a world defined by the increasing pace of change? In other words, how do we ensure our sustainability?

2. And in doing so, how do we reach new groups of students who can benefit from educational technology that can now bring them a University of Hartford education anywhere in the world?

During this process, I know there will be people who feel we have mischaracterized our strengths or the challenges or what we should do. I hope all of us can have a lively and thoughtful conversation on these subjects this fall and winter.

What is important now is for us to use the next five months or so to construct a plan that will help our University face the challenges of the next five years, the five years beyond that, and the century ahead.

Thanks for reading this far. Please let me know by email (horky@hartford.edu) if you have thoughts or ideas, he decided to help his classmates who were struggling to learn it. He created the website therevikkid.com and posted how-to videos there; he also started a question-and-answer forum to provide additional information.

The website has become the go-to place for Revit information, receiving 275,000 hits per month from people looking for tips on using the software. All those visits have turned Pinheiro into a nationally recognized expert on Revit software. He has been invited to speak at several conventions and seminars and is recognized by Autodesk as a top technical advisor on Revit.

“Revit is the bridge between design and technology and between school and the real world,” Pinheiro says, noting that he and more alumni members of the architecture community are embracing this three-dimensional design tool.

For Pinheiro, though, his bridge between school and the real world has been Davis, professor of architecture in CETA, and is recognized by Autodesk as a top technical advisor on Revit.

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For Pinheiro, though, his bridge between school and the real world has been Davis, professor of architecture in CETA, and a colleague of Pinheiro’s at Fletcher Thompson Inc. Pinheiro and Davis both work in the firm’s Hartford office. Pinheiro is one of four University of Hartford alumni currently working at Fletcher Thompson. “We are the entire design team for them in Connecticut,” joked Pinheiro, who joined the firm in 2010, while he was still in college.

Davis notes that being a mentor as well as a teacher is common in the University’s architecture department. “Full-time faculty teach first-year degree candidates and graduate students and everything in between,” he says, which offers the opportunity to develop a real bond between teacher and student. He admits, though, that a teacher and student working for the same architectural design firm is not a usual occurrence.

Davis and Pinheiro have been teammates on some projects at Fletcher Thompson, but much of the time they are just bouncing ideas off of each other about the separate projects they are working on. “A lot of what I’ve done for the past three years has been school designs, but I’ve also done some hospitals and some single-family homes,” Pinheiro says, adding that it is the variety that makes it he is doing so much fun. “For me, it’s always been about design, but I am intrigued by the intricacies of building and of technology,” he says.

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“He is so good with technology,” Davis says of Pinheiro. “That is critical in today’s architectural world, where technological skills are as vital as important as design skills. ‘Technology has changed everything,’ Davis says. After all, it changed Jeffrey Pinheiro into The Revit Kid.”