

Fitchburg State University
Strategic Planning White Paper
Academic Planning Working Group
November 15, 2014

Members: Randall Grometstein, chair; Michael Turk, Sam Tobin, Lisa Gim, Christopher Picone, Jeff Godin, Mike Leamy, Cathy Canney, Brian Bercier, Chris Cratsley, Linda LeBlanc, Jannette McMenemy.

#1. How do we strategically plan so our students are prepared for the future?

- Re-examine the role and mission of LAS. We affirm the value of Liberal Arts and Sciences, while calling for campus-wide discussions about the shared learning outcomes desired among programs and in all graduates.
- Gather information from multiple constituencies about how well students are achieving learning outcomes, and use the information to inform curriculum development.
- Foster a culture that encourages and supports faculty and librarians in collaboratively experimenting with teaching and learning, engaging in evidence-based decision-making, and communicating results.
- Create a campus-wide emphasis on academic engagement through high impact practices. These high impact practices might include first-year seminars, learning communities, service learning, student-faculty research, study abroad, capstone experiences, portfolios, as well as internships, practica and other field based experiences. Consider implementation of culminating experiences for all students, defined by the departments, to support students' efforts to gain employment after graduation.

#2. How do we improve admission, retention, and completion?

- Even as we face enrollment issues and demographic shifts, we need to strengthen and improve our academic offerings across the array of liberal arts and sciences as well as our professional programs consistent with national standards for our disciplinary offerings. While there can be a variety of delivery methods, the emphasis should be upon FSU's ability to offer foundations and quality learning environments. Maintaining small class size is also important to our identity, as we also address and incorporate new delivery methods and develop other technologies.
- Support campus wide emphasis on providing and communicating clear pathways to student success and graduation through the analysis of student success data, ongoing curricular development, comprehensive academic support services, and proactive advising. Enhance mentoring by student peers, staff and faculty with training and support to enhance connectivity, communication, and effectiveness. Evaluate obstacles

to retention and completion. Coordinate, review and communicate efforts to improve student retention and completion.

- Explore alternative pathways to degree completion. For example, consider new and more flexible options for course delivery, including accelerated courses, online and hybrid learning using technology in partnership with other schools. Consider additional competency based education options, and promote existing programs such as CLEP and LECAP.
- Increase opportunities for the enrollment of non-traditional students by providing programs (undergraduate and graduate) and delivery options that facilitate access, career opportunities and degree completion.
- Expand opportunities for undergraduate students to progress into graduate programs at Fitchburg State, including four-plus-one programs, post-bac bridge programs, in addition to our existing Master's offerings. Continue to develop collaborative degree programs with other graduate institutions.

Question #3: What process and standards would be appropriate to evaluate existing academic programs for expansion or contraction, or future academic programs for adoption?

- Enhance the cycle of program review, with an eye to meeting the needs of current and future students, including fostering faculty development and interdisciplinary efforts between departments, and assuring that our curricula and programs are current and responsive to the changing world. Coordinate regular surveys currently used such as NSSE, alumni surveys, employer surveys, and graduating student surveys in order to use the data to plan and make changes to programs as needed.
- The university should discuss, clarify and evaluate the criteria for making decisions about program size, development, or decline. Connect this process to the University's vision, mission, core values, and a liberal arts education. Faculty voices should be heard in program planning and decision-making.

Overall /Final Notes

- Develop mechanisms for reviewing progress on the Strategic Plan.
- Develop institutional memory of this planning process. (Library archives). Let's not do stuff and then forget we did it!