

ESU's Academic Affairs: More than a Classroom

An Academic Strategic Plan

2015-2018

January 7, 2014

Introduction

In the Spring of 2014 the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Deans and other Vice Presidents, solicited names of individuals to serve on the Academic Plan Steering Committee. That group was convened¹ in April of 2014 and charged to develop a strategic plan for the division of Academic Affairs that would align with the goals and objectives of the University Strategic Plan.

The steering group was asked to complete the strategic plan by January of 2015, and so it met regularly between April and December of 2014.

A preliminary plan with four immediate action items was released in August of 2014. Those four action items were released early because the steering group deemed to be time sensitive initiatives. These initiatives are in various phases of implementation and form part of this plan (the four initiatives are identified in this document).

This Academic Affairs strategic plan is not only aligned with the University Strategic Plan, but also incorporates input of faculty and chairs² and the deliberations of the Academic Plan Steering Committee. The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, integrated these inputs and identified a set of strategies and initiatives that further the attainment of the goals set by the University Strategic Plan by identifying synergistic initiatives that cut across the individual four goals of the University Strategic Plan (see section below on University Strategic Plan Alignment).

This plan was disseminated to faculty for review and input. A series of four faculty roundtables and one open roundtable were held during November 2014 in order to seek input from the faculty at large. In addition, an online portal was created for faculty to submit their comments. This input was deliberated by the Academic Plan Steering Committee, which incorporated it into its final version of the plan as presented here.

The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan's implementation will be guided by implementation plans developed by the individual Colleges, Departments, Programs and Units as well as University-Wide implementation groups for university-wide strategic initiatives. These implementation plans will be operational documents with benchmarks to measure the progress made on the strategic initiatives. The implementation plans will be reviewed annually to determine the need for mid-implementation adjustments. The progress of individual implementation plans will be reviewed by respective Deans, Directors, Provost, other VPs and the President.

University Strategic Plan Alignment

This plan is grounded on the following four goals of the University Strategic Plan.

University Strategic Plan Goal 1 - STUDENT SUCCESS AT ESU: ACHIEVING HIGHER SATISFACTION, RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES. This goal seeks to provide rich educational experiences for students that meet their intellectual, social, financial, and civic development needs so that they graduate and continue to be avid ESU alumni, accomplished professionals, and exceptional citizens.

¹ The group is comprised of seven members of the faculty, Carol Miller, Gina Scala, John Hauth, John Kraybill-Greggo, John Elwood, Darlene Farris-Labar and Nancy Greenwalt. The group is chaired by Dean Alberto Cardelle.

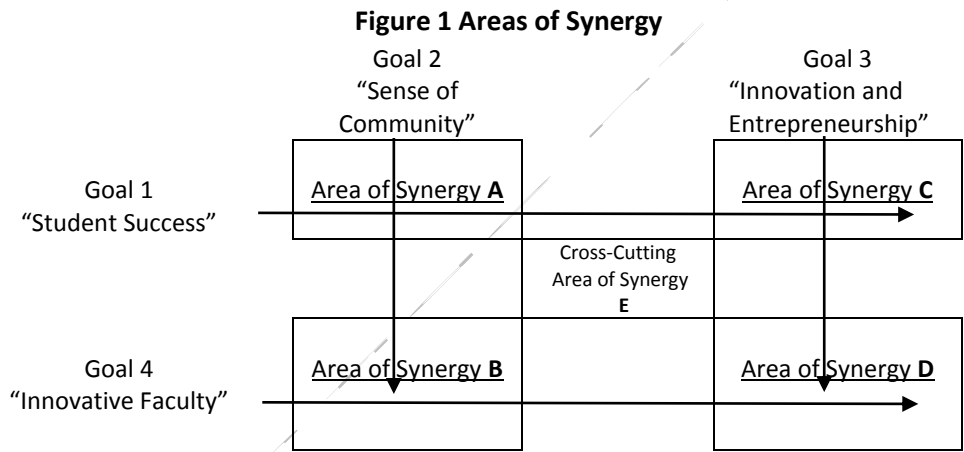
² The input of over 100 faculty and 25 chairs through two different surveys.

University Strategic Plan Goal 2 - A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY: UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING ESU’S MISSION AND VALUES AND BUILDING A COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY AND REGION. This goal seeks to build “our university without walls,” defined by a sense of community respect, involvement, and excitement so that all members of ESU feel part of a vibrant on-campus environment and an engaged external community.

University Strategic Plan Goal 3 - A REPUTATION FOR INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CREATING A CURIOUS, INVENTIVE, AND RISK-TAKING CULTURE. This goal seeks to ensure that ESU has a campus community that: i- Accepts risk-taking and engages in innovative and entrepreneurial activities that create an exciting learning environment; ii- Invests its time in collaborating with the community and the region; iii- Shares with the region the responsibility of developing an economy that competes globally and is also sustainable; and iv) Prepares our students to become leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators.

University Strategic Plan Goal 4 - INNOVATIVE FACULTY: DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP AND RETHINKING THE PREPARATION OF SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES This goal seeks to invest in ESU’s faculty in ways that will enable them to redesign the academic experience.

Instead of developing strategies that seek to attain one goal at a time this plan identifies initiatives that are synergistic, and impact more than one of the goals. The initiatives are organized around 5 areas of synergy (see figure 1). Initiatives are designed to assist in attaining more than one goal, for example initiatives in *Area of synergy A* are designed to contribute to goals 1 & 2.



Vision and Mission

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the country and the globe face ever-increasing challenges that require more college-educated citizens who can provide the intellectual capacity and leadership to find solutions and innovations to match the problems of our time.

Within this context, and recognizing the University's strategic plan, Academic Affairs' vision of the future is that:

East Stroudsburg University will be a premier undergraduate and graduate learner-centered institution encompassing the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions, and where professors know their students' life story and help them write the story of their future.

To attain this vision the mission of Academic Affairs is to:

Offer distinctive undergraduate and graduate experiences through which students can expect...

- ***to encounter a committed faculty that actively and innovatively teach, mentor and guide them to pursue their aspirations and engender in them a passion for learning;***
- ***to learn both within the classroom and the community;***
- ***to become exceptional citizens and professionals;***
- ***to have innovative and creative avenues for the pursuit and application of knowledge, not only within active classrooms, but through internships, research opportunities, service experiences, and global encounters; and***
- ***to learn how to pursue opportunities beyond the resources they control.***

Academic Affairs Initiatives

The initiatives proposed by this plan fall under four overall objectives:

- 1) Greater decentralization;
- 2) Multi-disciplinary engagement;
- 3) Community engagement; and
- 4) Strategic programmatic growth.

Area of Synergy (A) between Student Success & Sense of Community -

The purpose of the initiatives in this area are to expand the educational experience of students by strengthening the teaching, research and service venues of faculty within and beyond the classroom and the campus.

A-1 Develop a university-wide First Year Experience that will allow students to appreciate the value of knowledge creation, systematic inquiry, critical thinking, and robust debate. The first year experience should incorporate opportunity for students to apply these values and skills across ESU and the community that surrounds the University and expose them to the wealth of University and community resources available to them during their college education.

A-2 All undergraduate students will be engaged in a quality general education studies curriculum that provides each student with a solid foundation for lifelong learning enabling them to become effective and engaged citizens of a diverse local and global society. To this end students should have the opportunity to satisfy this citizenship objective with a purposeful set of experiences including but not limited to a service learning course, a

global experience, and extra-curricular activities that allow students to demonstrate civic engagement, and/or community service programming offered by SAA.

A-3 Establish a “Student Academic Leaders Society” in which academic departments and programs identify students that can serve as program ambassadors and serve as peer mentors to younger students and presenters in freshman and sophomore curricula.

A-4 Establish a University without walls coordinating group that, along with the service-learning committee, can be the precursor to an office of Civic Engagement, with the overall goal of having ESU become an anchor institution.³ Activities that the group may consider include --

- Mapping the existing community engagement assets at ESU.
- Creating a comprehensive portfolio of educational experiences that can lead to significant community impact (research, service, etc.).
- Encouraging departments to establish advisory boards with community representation.
- Identifying mechanisms of integrating off-campus internship, practicum and clinical site supervisors with an appropriate “preceptor” title.
- Working with SAA to integrate student clubs as a bridge for community activities.
- Regularizing transportation to regional urban areas (e.g. the Cornell bus).
- Linking career services internship connections to academic departments.
- Encouraging one course per department to be designated a “university without walls” course where a certain percentage of contact hours occur off campus.
- Making it easier for local organizations and groups to use ESU facilities.
- Developing mechanisms to expand activities and opportunities for the community to experience the academic side of the campus such as, increasing the provision of continuing education (CEU) opportunities, creating a community education program that may include “community leadership” program and a “university for the day” component.

A-5 Identify and improve ways in which the programs and services available through the Division of Research and Economic Development and the Innovation Center can be integrated into the academic mission of departments and programs.

A-6 Establish an *Extended Learning Working Group* that will expand the opportunities for departments and programs to offer programming through extended learning (EL) format, integrate EL students into the university community, explore linkages with the broader community and recommend an oversight structure plus operational structures designed to make sure that off-campus and on-campus EL programs thrive as core functions of ESU.

Area of Synergy (B) between Sense of Community and Innovative Faculty

The purpose of the initiatives in this area is to create more formal and informal collegial environments to exchange and discuss ideas and to develop collaborative relationships.

³ Anchor institution is an increasingly popular way of thinking about the role of societal institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, in the development of communities, cities, towns and villages (Taylor and Luther 2013).

B-1 The Value of Higher Public Education. A set of university wide forums and events to discuss the public purpose and value of public higher education. Working with all university constituencies, the office of the president and faculty leadership should coordinate a series of open discussions that will allow our internal constituencies to come to an understanding of the CBA language that states; “The universities exist for the common good of the citizens of the Commonwealth...” These should then be followed by a set of activities to highlight these common goods to external constituencies. *B-1 was one of the early action initiatives released in August of 2014.*

B- 2 Create forums for faculty & staff exchanges led by faculty and/or staff.

- The first priority is a “Council of Chairs.” This is going to require a new structure of the chair’s meeting, and professional training for the chairs. The steering group foresees that department chairs are the nucleus of any innovative strategic plan. Chairs occupy the position which faces the confluence of factors emanating from faculty and the administration. Therefore this group of faculty requires greater ability to innovate, plan, coordinate, and implement as a group. Therefore the steering group is asking this work group to: i) Transform the current monthly chair meetings to a time when chairs can work together to address concerns and generate ideas; ii) Facilitate the creation of a council of chairs leadership elected by the chairs to convene and facilitate the council meetings; iii) Establish periodic professional development experiences for chairs. *B-2 was one of the early action initiatives released in August of 2014, and since then, the chairs have established the “Academic Council of Chairs.”*
- A second priority is a “Managers and Directors Forum” with a similar structure.

B-3 Establish spaces and events for faculty, managers, staff and administrators to interact informally. This may include -- dining areas, regular receptions, coffee hours, brown-bag sessions, recreational activities that create informal collegial environments to exchange and discuss ideas and to develop collaborative relationships.

Area of Synergy (C) between Innovation and Entrepreneurship and Student Success

The purpose of the initiatives in this area is to strengthen and expand the opportunities provided to students through the curriculum and the advisement process, that will prepare them for the rapidly changing context within which they will live, work and play as graduates of ESU.

C-1 Encourage more alumni involvement in the University through program-based alumni rosters that can be integrated into classroom experiences and/or community-based activities.

C-2 Establish curricular cluster areas (Human Services, Health Care, Science and Technology, The Arts, Business, etc.) that align with growth areas due to changes in community & workforce needs. Degree programs could align under the cluster areas in order to create, sustain, and grow academic programs, especially through interdisciplinary offerings. These cluster areas need to emerge from Colleges and be developed in a consultative and integrated program review process between Deans and Chairs for consultations. These clusters of growth should be identified using data driven metrics including --

- Critical skills needed for the workforce;
- Mission of the university;
- Program demographics;
- Student demand;
- Evidence-based examples from peer institutions;

- The capitalizing of collective benefits (cross departmental improvements) and gaps in the curriculum

C-3 Establish a comprehensive college-based enrollment management plan that recruits and retains a diverse, outstanding student body consistent with a learner-centered university. The plan should be developed in a consultative process by determining the capacity of each program, matching enrollment to capacity, or as appropriate, increasing or decreasing capacity to ensure quality education and maximize resource utilization. The plan should:

- Explore differential tuition to address the demand for and/or the cost of offering the programs;
- Strengthen and refine recruiting efforts to include regional, national, and international emphases;
- Increase alumni and current student involvement in recruiting;
- Focus recruiting students from underrepresented groups in higher education and at ESU.

C-4 Establish comprehensive but discipline-specific success-advising models that strengthen interactions between faculty and students, from recruitment to graduation and throughout their careers. These may be adapted from best-practice examples from peer institutions and/or built from existing models within the institution. These should be adapted at the college or departmental level. Examples of these include: The “Grand Valley State Blueprint for Success”⁴; ESU’s Professional Development School; ESU’s Career Pathways Model.

Area of Synergy (D) Innovative Faculty and Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The purpose of the initiatives in this area is to create an institution that fosters and rewards colleges and departments for the development of quality and use of innovation.

D-1 Establish an incentive system to recognize programs for growth, recruitment, and quality of the educational experience.

- Change currency from number of majors to student university retention (at the university level) and student performance (vs. appropriate national cohorts). Reward “donor departments,” “landing departments” as well as “service departments”⁵ by using a varied set of metrics.
- Academic programs will continually examine curricula and course content, including general education, to ensure that the university-wide student learning outcomes are integrated into undergraduate education.
- Incentivize innovation within programs so that undergraduate students may have greater opportunity to:
 - complete an original project, either individually or in a team, in science, scholarship, or creative expression in their major or minor;
 - acquire familiarity with a language other than English;
 - increase the use of current and emerging technologies in curricula and co-curricular matters;

⁴ <http://www.gvsu.edu/clasadvising/academic-success-63.htm>

⁵ “Donor departments” are department which attract many incoming freshman but then may lose students to other departments as the student progresses through the curriculum; “landing departments” are departments that receive students from the various entry departments; and “service departments” are those that provide key course work for various majors and programs.

- Increase participation in study abroad opportunities.

D-2 Increase decentralization throughout the institution's operations to provide greater flexibility at the departmental level. As a way to get department's to engage in innovative programs, decentralize budgets so as to incentivize innovation (this is a strong recommendation). Allow departments to have a role in generating efficiency and quality by shifting away from the historical budgeting process.

- Continue, and further pilot, the "Extended Learning" budget allocation models with other innovative programming (in which departments get a budget and have decision making potential to reduce costs and improve efficiency).
- Create a "Summer" revenue model where departments can recapture a share of summer tuition revenue.
- Bring the department perspectives into PC decision making by bringing in Deans, and bringing in a chair representative (the Chair of the Academic Chairs Council) into the PLT.

D- 3 Create a "faculty innovation integration group" with the mission to integrate different innovative ESU strategies into teaching with resources to allocate and to share. The group needs to be integrated by, and coordinate the work of the following existing groups:

- Innovative teaching (CETL and CTT);
- Global engagement (International programs);
- Research (FDR, Senate Research Committee);
- Entrepreneurship (Center for Entrepreneurship).

In addition the group should create more organic (less formal) mechanisms for faculty to learn from peers who are introducing innovative approaches to teaching and advising.

Area of Synergy (E) between All Goals

E-1 Create a "student fundamental skills advancement" advisory group. The ultimate requirement for student success across all of the established goals of *Students First: Innovate ESU*, the University's strategic plan, is for students to have the necessary fundamental skills to succeed in college. This group will work across the colleges and with various student success programs to strengthen existing programs and develop new strategies that will provide students with the fundamental skills in writing, math and reading to succeed at ESU.

E-2 Create an **Interdisciplinary Studies Center** with a dedicated staff and a cross-college advisory group that has as its purpose enhancing and increasing inter-disciplinary curricular offerings. The group should establish strategies that shift the interdisciplinary major from retroactive consideration to a proactive consideration for students and change faculty perception of the degree from being an "escape valve" to "intentional degrees." So, the group should consider:

- Working with the academic chairs, DAEL should develop pre-established prescribed 2 and 3 department interdisciplinary majors, (avoid the cafeteria approach).
- Develop a mechanism by which the departments receive a share of the number of majors (for example, for 2-department interdisciplinary degrees the student counts .5 for each department, for 3 departments the student counts .33 for each department).
- These inter-disciplinary degrees should be assessed for possible conversion to established BA/BS degrees that would be housed within academic departments.

- Scale-up existing and successful inter-disciplinary curricula.
- Include capstone experience and an assessment process that may include a digital portfolio.
- Use the interdisciplinary degree to assist UNDEC majors to declare by a specified time (determined either by a credit limit or number of semesters).

E-3 Creation of an operational streamlining workgroup. The establishment of a workgroup with representatives from key administrative units that can begin to address ways of alleviating the operational bottlenecks associated with innovative programming. This may include, but is not limited to, co-taught courses, cross department and cross-college workloads, inter-disciplinary programs, dual major programs, awarding departments that retain students at the university, if not necessarily in their departments, etc. Key participants include APSCUF, Human Resources, Business offices, Enrollment Services. This may lead to a permanent, or temporary role of “*Chief Innovation Officer*.” *E-2 was one of the early action initiatives released in August of 2014.*

E-4 Establish an ESU Honor Code for all constituents. This code should include a campus-wide commitment to a practice of “respectful discourse”, developed and adopted by all constituencies. The process must be transparent and developed through open forums. The code should be informed by the existing professional codes that emerge from the different professional codes of ethics and conduct by which many, if not all, disciplines and professions already abide.

E-5 Enhancement of the curriculum process to assist faculty and administration in providing a more efficient and effective curriculum process. Have University-Wide Curriculum Committee (UWCC) and the Academic Council continue its work to make the institution’s curriculum process more flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing educational context. The request is that the groups consider the following components:

- Expedite the adoption of the online curricular forms (with built-in form validation tools) that has already been developed by the UWCC, and that will make the submission of curriculum changes and proposals more efficient.
- Re-issue the curriculum process manual that has been developed by the UWCC (a playbook) that will allow faculty and chairs to find in one place the basic “how to’s” of the process.
- The development of curriculum action categories that similar to the IRB process, could include categories of curriculum change that may be expedited by the chair or approved electronically in between committee meetings (pre-req changes, title changes etc.)
- The creation of a “provisional – pilot curriculum” category that would allow courses and programs to be given an expedited but thorough review of its merits but with the understanding that these are programs and courses that will have to come back for formal approval at a later date. The idea is to provide departments and programs more than a one year timeframe to make a course or program work. *E-5 was one of the early action initiatives released in August of 2014.*

Appendix 1
Graduate Strategic Task Force Committee
Final Report

Introduction

In June 2014, the Graduate Strategic Task Force (GSTF)⁶ was convened as a subcommittee to the Academic Plan Steering Committee with the charge to make recommendations to enhance graduate programming. Monthly (June-November) the GSTF met to evaluate: data, barriers to graduate enrollment and program growth, potential leadership models and avenues to enhance the Graduate College's presence. The GSTF reached out to campus constituents such as the Graduate Advisory Council (GAC) and Academic Chairs Council (ACC) to assist in developing the vision for the Graduate College.

The following recommendations were made, with modifications made by the Academic Plan Steering Committee:

- I. Reorganization of Graduate College.
 - a. Eliminate graduate dean position and decentralize academic responsibilities, placing them under each Academic College Dean.
 - b. Appoint a Director of Graduate Studies to administer daily operations within the Graduate College, convene the Graduate Advisory Council and facilitate its work.
 - c. Academic College Deans would attend the Graduate Advisory Council (GAC) to foster increased collaboration and initiate program development.
 - d. Reorganize GAC Meetings to allow college/discipline discussion and collaboration.
 - e. Develop task forces within the GAC to examine the portfolio of programs, duplicate coursework, and identify common ground and synergies.
- II. Based on portfolio examination, develop a broad and varied portfolio of graduate programs with strong emphasis on interdisciplinary degree programs and certificates (For example, Media Technology and Psychology moving toward a Learning Sciences program).
- III. Develop and implement standards and procedures for faculty with a Graduate Faculty status, with renewal every five years. Indiana University of Pennsylvania has a mature model to provide guidance for implementation, including standards, application procedures and review processes (see sample from IUP, <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=12803>)
- IV. The following represents immediate operational action items to enhance the graduate experience:
 - a. Identify liaisons in Center for Enrollment Services (CES) that will handle graduate student issues. Graduate Coordinators would receive the listing of liaisons to provide enhanced communication.
 - b. Increase the coordination of ancillary departments such as International Programs and Extended Learning with Graduate College.
 - c. Recommend that graduate application fees funnel back to the Graduate College or graduate initiatives.
 - d. Increase virtual presence: Increase the number of featured stories online to represent Graduate programming (dissertations, internships, etc.)

⁶ Committee Members: Shala Davis, Steve Godin, Christine Hofmeister Douglas Lare, Ko Mishima, Paula Parker, Rhonda Sutton, Beth Sockman, Kevin Quintero (Graduate College)

- e. Public relations liaison should join the GAC. This would provide a direct connection to accomplish increased virtual presence.
- f. Online orientation training for graduate students.
- g. The GSTF serve as the search committee for the new leader of the Graduate College.