

ESU's Academic Affairs: More than a Classroom

An Academic Strategic Plan

2015-2018
11/1/14 Version

Vision and Mission

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

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 learn outside the classroom;***
- ***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 become exceptional citizens and professionals; and***
- ***to have innovative and entrepreneurial¹ avenues for the creation and application of knowledge, not only within active classrooms, but through internships, research opportunities, service experiences, and global encounters.***

The Process

In the Spring of 2014 the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Deans and other VPs, solicited names of individuals to serve on the Academic Plan Steering Committee (ASPC). That group was convened² 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 has been meeting continuously between April and October of 2014.

Before the current draft of the plan was developed, a preliminary plan with 4 initiatives was released in late August of 2014. Those four initiatives are in various phases of implementation and form part of this plan. Those four are identified in this document.

¹ The steering group has employed the following definition of entrepreneurship "*entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled*" (Howard Stevenson, 2011).

² 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.

This first draft of the Academic Affairs strategic plan titled *ESU's Academic Affairs: More than a Classroom* is not only aligned with the University Strategic Plan but also incorporates input of faculty and chairs³ 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 is being disseminated to faculty for review and input. A series of four faculty roundtables and one open roundtable will be held during November 2014 in order to seek input from the faculty at large. In addition, an online portal will be created for faculty to submit their comments. This input will be further deliberated by the Academic Plan Steering Committee.

After this period of input and deliberation a final version will be presented to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President in January 2015.

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, VPs and President. This plan recommends that the implementation plan progress reviews be monitored by the University-Wide Assessment Committee.

University Strategic Plan Alignment

The following four goals of the University Strategic Plan formed the framework around which to build this plan. However instead of developing strategies that represented one goal the 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).

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.

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.

³ The input of over 100 faculty and 25 chairs through two different surveys.

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:

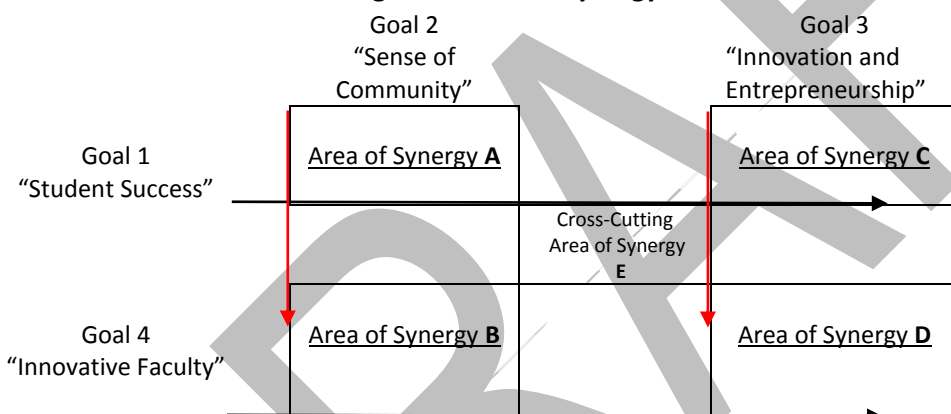
- Accepts risk-taking and engages in innovative and entrepreneurial activities that create an exciting learning environment;
- Invests its time in collaborating with the community and the region;
- Shares with the region the responsibility of developing an economy that competes globally and is also sustainable; and
- 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.

Figure 1 Areas of Synergy



Academic Affairs Initiatives

The initiatives highlighted 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

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

A-1 Develop a university-wide First Year Experience that includes strategic course activities and assessments through which ESU freshman will increase their awareness of the community that surrounds the University and expose the wealth of 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. To this end a citizenship requirement should be integrated into the Gen Ed program that would encompass a purposeful set of social entrepreneurship⁴ experiences that students must engage in as part of their general education requirement. This may include active participation in the One Book One Campus program, a service learning course, extra-curricular activities that allow students to demonstrate civic engagement, and/or community service programming offered by SAA.

A-3 Creation of 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 1st year experience curricula.

A-4 Establish a University without walls coordinating group and an office of Civic Engagement that could lead to ESU becoming an anchor institution⁵ in the development of the local community while also providing our students with more experiential learning opportunities. Programs that the group may consider include --

- Mapping the existing community engagement assets that exist.
- 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 ways of getting internships, practicum and clinical supervisors a “preceptor” title.
- Expanding CEU activities
- Working with SAA to integrate student club as a bridge for community activities
- Regularizing transportation to regional urban areas (Cornell bus)
- Linking career services internship connections to department
- 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
- Creating a “community” leadership course
- Establishing a “university for the day” program

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 in the academic mission of departments and programs.

A-6 Create 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.

⁴ Social entrepreneurship is the process of pursuing innovative solutions to social problems.

⁵ 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).

Area of Synergy B

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.

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 the 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 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:
 - Transform the current monthly chair meetings to a time when chairs can work together to address concerns and generate ideas.
 - Facilitate the creation of a council of chairs leadership elected by the chairs to convene and facilitate the council meetings.
 - Establish periodic professional development experiences for chairs.
- Secondary priority is a “Managers and Directors Forum” with a similar structure.

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.”

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

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

interdisciplinary). 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 Develop comprehensive but discipline specific success advising models that strengthen interactions with students from recruitment to graduation and throughout their careers. These may be adapted from best-practice examples from peer institutions and/or built-off existing models from within the institution. These should be adapted at the college or departmental level. Example of these include

- The “Grand Valley State Blueprint for Success”⁶
- ESU’s Professional Development School
- ESU’s Career Pathways Model

Area of Synergy D

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 a system to reward 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”⁷ 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.

⁶ <http://www.gvsu.edu/clasadvising/academic-success-63.htm>

⁷ “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.

- 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
 - have acquired a familiarity with a language other than English
 - increase the use of current and emerging technologies in curricula and co-curricula matters
 - Increase participation in study abroad opportunities

D-2 Increase decentralization throughout the institution's operations to provide greater flexibility at the departmental level.

Decentralization of budgets (this is a strong recommendation). Need to move departmental rationale from defensive posture to collaborative posture. This comes from strategic funding realignments. But this has to happen at the college level. Allow departments to have a role in generating efficiency and revenue as our historical budgeting process does not reward innovation or growth. If all budgets are the same and if all budgets are reduced the same, why be innovative?

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

D-3 Create a faculty innovation integration group with 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)
 - Flipped classroom
 - Cooperative/active/team-based learning
 - Integration of university community
- 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

E-1 Create an **Interdisciplinary Studies Center** with a dedicated staff and a cross-college advisory group that has as its purpose to enhance and increase the inter-disciplinary curricular offerings. The group should consider the following objectives and activities—

- Shift the interdisciplinary major from retroactive consideration to a proactive considerations
 - Include capstone experience and an assessment process that may include a digital portfolio
 - Need to shift the narrative from "escape valve" to "intentional degree"

- Need to require UNDEC majors to declare by 45 credits and if they do not they get automatically moved to an inter-disciplinary major
- Intrusive advising from DAEL and departments is required for students struggling to declare and identify a major
- Where applicable departments should develop tracks for students who cannot meet graduation requirements.
- Working with Chairs DAEL should develop pre-established prescribed 2 and 3 department interdisciplinary majors
- 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

E-2 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 who 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-3 Establishment of an ESU Honor Code for all constituents. This code should include a campus wide commitment to a practice of “respectful discourse” developed and assumed 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 that many if not all disciplines already abide by.

E-4 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:

- a. 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.
- b. Re-issue 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.
- c. 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.)
- d. 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. (This was one of the early action initiatives released in August of 2014).

Notes on Pending Sections

- There are two separate groups working on academic strategic plans that address research and graduate education.

DRAFT