

**Academic Strategic Planning Update
Aspirations and Strategic Issues
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INTRODUCTION

The Academic Strategic Planning Committee was convened at the end of Spring 2008. The charge to the committee was to develop, in collaboration with the campus community, an up-to-date and ambitious Academic Strategic Plan (ASP) to serve as a decision-making guide over the next five years. Moreover the plan should help us focus resources and energy on key issues, provide a solid foundation for our upcoming accreditation visit, and, most importantly, help us build an even more effective university. Notably, the strategic plan should align with the Mission and Core Values of The University of Montana.

UM Mission:

(from <http://www.umt.edu/president/umms.htm>).

The University of Montana-Missoula pursues academic excellence as indicated by the quality of curriculum and instruction, student performance, and faculty professional accomplishments. The University accomplishes this mission, in part, by providing unique educational experiences through the integration of the liberal arts, graduate study, and professional training with international and interdisciplinary emphases. Through its graduates, the University also seeks to educate competent and humane professionals and informed, ethical, and engaged citizens of local and global communities. Through its programs and the activities of faculty, staff, and students, The University of Montana-Missoula provides basic and applied research, technology transfer, cultural outreach, and service benefiting the local community, region, state, nation and the world

UM Core Values:

(from http://www.umt.edu/home/administration/Strategic_Directions_2008.pdf)

- Learning experiences of high quality designed to allow students to realize their full potential with student success as the primary objective;
- Basic and applied research that contributes to knowledge and meets the needs of the State, region, nation, and world;
- Diversity and community among students, faculty, and staff;
- Affordable access to higher education for Montanans;
- Effective and efficient use of resources, providing full accountability for all funds; and
- Service to the citizens, communities, regions, business, industry, State, and world.

ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In April, 2008, the committee met with Provost Engstrom to receive its charge. Part of the charge is that the ASP should be developed in parallel to, and in close connection with, the Accreditation process. The ASP committee has endeavored to link to other strategic planning efforts happening at the University level (e.g., Technology, Graduate School, Continuing

Education) as well as at the unit level. For example, many individual academic units and programs are in some stage of planning. The committee has been asked to design the ASP to provide for inclusion of unit and program plans as units undertake their own strategic planning. Just as the ASP is informed by strategic plans from the President and Regents, the unit plans should be informed by the ASP and vice versa.

Academic Strategic Planning Milestones

Early on, the committee focused on defining the process for developing the plan and establishing milestones to track our progress. The specific goal is to have the completed ASP published by the end of summer, 2009. The main milestones for this work are listed below.

Organization - Spring 2008

- Define process
- Plan for coordination with Accreditation Committee work

Environmental Scan - Summer and Early Fall 2008

- Develop background information (data, reports, etc.) and context for the ASP (*completed*)
- Prepare report from Scan - Ready for Circulation by late January 2009 (*underway now*)

Identify Aspirations and Strategic Issues Emerging from Environmental Scan - Fall 2008

- Develop list of aspirations and issues based on environmental scan (*completed*)
- Circulate list to campus community (*underway now*)

Finalize List of Strategic Issues: Feb 2009

- Campus-wide town hall meetings, visits to departments, and discussions (*meetings being scheduled and will be announced in the next week*)
- Surveys as needed

Subcommittee Work to Make Action Plans to Address the Strategic Issues: March - April 2009

- Appoint subcommittees for each strategic issue
- Define goals and indicators for each strategic issue
- Identify a practical set of clear actions to achieve strategic goals
- Articulate resources needed for achieve goals

Develop Annual Plan to Review progress - late Spring 2009

- Timeline and process for campus input and discussion of plan annually
- Metrics for annual reviews

Publication of the Academic Strategic Plan - Summer 2009

Since April, 2008, the Academic Strategic Planning Committee has met regularly. The main focus of the committee's work so far has been to articulate aspirations for Academic Affairs at UM, to conduct an environmental scan, and then to identify the strategic issues that influence our ability to realize our aspirations. After defining the process at the end of Spring 2008, the ASP committee identified questions to guide an environmental scan. The questions developed focused on both internal and external influences on Academic Affairs at UM. Questions for the internal scan related to the broad categories of the UM student body, access and affordability, the UM work force related to Academic Affairs, academic programs offered, technological

capabilities and funding trends. Questions for the external scan focused on demographic trends, technology, trends in K-12 that reach into higher education, economic environment, political and regulatory environment, defining our competitors, natural resource issues, and international factors.

Over the summer, the committee collected data to answer the environmental scan questions. This included exploring system-wide published strategic plans, trends and expectations for higher education in Montana and beyond, and unit operating plans from 2007. The staff in the Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Analysis provided extensive data related to student affairs (e.g., enrollment, retention, cost of education), the workforce, diversity, research and creative activity, demographic trends, and so on. Moreover, the Committee met with many individuals who had expertise in areas related to the environmental scan. Finally, targeted campus stakeholders were asked to respond to a short survey that asked about what makes UM unique, surprises over the last five years, what they would most like to change, and how they hope UM will be described five years from now.

After extensive review of the data collected, the Committee has summarized the aspirations that emerged and the issues that will have to be addressed in the coming years to ensure we can meet these aspirations.

ASPIRATIONS FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AT UM

In five years ...

- UM will be well along the path to becoming a major research university with an entrepreneurial spirit and a major force in the evolution of Montana's economy and culture.
- UM will achieve/maintain an optimum intellectual and real world blend of the arts, sciences and cultural experiences for a truly interdisciplinary and collaborative campus.
- UM will be recognized as a leader and innovator in key disciplinary areas, capitalizing on our unique environment and location.
- UM will be known for having an exciting and stimulating intellectual atmosphere for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff, including...
 - UM will be renowned for an intellectually exciting and distinctive undergraduate experience that is integrated across the curriculum and prepares students for addressing the big questions that we face as a global society.
 - UM will provide a world-class experience for graduate students.
 - UM will be a leader in two- and four-year education, offering academic, professional/technical, transfer, and workforce programs that address the needs of diverse student populations and regional employers.
 - UM will be a recognized regional leader in online and distance education.
 - UM will have faculty and students globally connected and engaged.
- UM will be the leader in Montana in diversity, and will be a major force in the diversification of both the workforce and student body.
- UM will have an all-encompassing, seamless information technology environment for all aspects of teaching, learning, and research.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

To achieve our mission and aspirations, we must focus our efforts. Because UM cannot be everything to everyone, we must focus on strengths and the potential for programs of national and international distinction. Attainment of our aspirations requires careful prioritization and leveraging of existing resources, along with enhancing our resource base. We also must address the following strategic issues (listed in no particular order).

- a. **The Undergraduate Experience** (creating a world class curriculum; mindfully connecting teaching and learning to best deliver this curriculum) – who are we preparing, what are we preparing them to do, and how best to retain them and prepare them to be successful?
- b. **Development of COT/Community Colleges in Montana** – better articulation and synergy.
- c. **Articulation Between K-12 and Higher Education in Montana**– including dual enrollment, teacher certification and in-service professional development, addressing deficiencies in preparation, and consistent outreach from UM to K-12 schools in Montana.
- d. **Enabling Technology for Teaching and Scholarship** – how technology is funded and managed, looking toward the future of devices and web 2.0; paying attention to training, nimbleness.
- e. **Perceptions and Reality of the Cost of Education versus the Value of Education at UM** – who has access, addressing affordability; better branding and communication with stakeholders (in MT and beyond) of our scholarship and community service.
- f. **A Coherent Vision for Research, Creativity, and Scholarship** – where and how do we want to cultivate distinction for discovery, innovation and leadership; a climate for interdisciplinarity; connection to the Montana economy.
- g. **Strengthening Communication and Transparency** - in line with our value and tradition of shared governance; better communication with stakeholders.
- h. **The Workplace Conditions** - allow staff and faculty to meet their potentials, and that allow them to collaborate more effectively in service of teaching, scholarship and service.
- i. **Cultivate Graduate Programs** - attract excellent students and prepare them to make scholarly and creative contributions in their field – Curriculum and research opportunities matched to our current reputation, student demand, capitalizing on our location; stipends and in-state status.
- j. **Diversity** – cultivating a climate and curriculum to values diversity and recognizes the value of a diverse student body, faculty, and staff.
- k. **The Changing World Around Us** – international programs and exchanges, research, key languages sustainability, interdisciplinarity, demographics, globalization, economies, and so on.
- l. **Achieving Optimal Enrollment** – what is optimal for UM and for the educational experience we value.