

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TO GUIDE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
2010 - 2015**

**Prepared on behalf of the Academic Community at UM
by the Academic Strategic Planning Committee**

Carol Brewer, Chair
College of Arts and Sciences

Barry Brown
Mansfield Library

Blakely Brown
Health and Human Performance

Perry Brown
Graduate School

Ray Carlisle
TRIO Student Support

Sarah Cullison
Graduate Student

Reed Humphrey
Physical Therapy

Andrew King-Ries
Law School

Stephen Kalm
College of Visual and Performing Arts

Peggy Kuhr
School of Journalism

Mark Medvetz
College of Technology

Jakki Mohr
Management

Sean Morrison
Undergraduate Student

Bill Muse
Planning, Budget and Analysis

Andrew Ware
Physics and Astronomy

The Need

An up-to-date and ambitious Academic Strategic Plan (ASP) will serve as a decision-making guide over the next five years. It will 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. The ASP has been developed in parallel to, and in close connection with, the Accreditation process. The following principles have guided the planning process:

- The focus of the plan is on enhancing the effectiveness of our core mission. However, the emphasis of the plan is not so much on how we spend our time (teaching, research, and service) as on how we optimize the outcomes of our efforts (for example, student learning, new knowledge and creative works, and solutions to problems).
- The planning process has been stepwise and deliberate, open and collaborative, and informed by knowledge of external forces and expectations.
- Planning has considered the resource base we can realistically, but ambitiously, expect.
- Academic planning sought the involvement of other sectors within the University.

The Planning Process

The Academic Strategic Planning Committee was convened at the end of Spring 2008, and charged with developing, 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. Implicit is that 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.

The planning committee collected data to answer a series of environmental scan questions. The environmental scan questions addressed by the ASP Committee 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, the economic environment, political and regulatory environments, defining our competitors, natural resource issues, and international factors. 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 Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Analysis provided extensive data related to students (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 with expertise in areas related to the environmental scan. Finally, targeted campus stakeholders were asked to respond to a short survey that asked questions 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 summarized the aspirations that emerged and the issues that will have to be addressed in the coming years to ensure we can meet our aspirations. Through a series of townhall meetings, the issues were prioritized, resulting in the five key initiatives to address in the next five years.

Aspirations For Academic Affairs

The following aspirations emerged for Academic Affairs from the interviews, surveys, and discussions conducted during the environmental scan phase of the ASP Committee's work.

In five years ...

- UM will continue to grow as 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 of 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...
 - Being renowned for an intellectually exciting and distinctive undergraduate experience that is integrated across curricula, and prepares students for addressing the big questions that we face as a global society;
 - Providing a world-class experience for graduate students;
 - Leading in both two- and four-year undergraduate education, offering academic, professional/technical, transfer, and workforce programs that address the needs of diverse student populations and regional employers;
 - Leading the region in online and distance education; and
 - Connecting and engaging faculty and students globally.
- 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 a comprehensive, seamless information technology environment for all aspects of teaching, learning, and research.

**STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND STRATEGIES
FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA**

FIRST INITIATIVE – Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Undergraduate Education

Goal 1 - Create a College of Discovery to offer a distinctive first year curriculum to all incoming students focused around “Big Questions” that address challenges of the 21st century. This first year will be followed by invigorated major courses of study that link learning and discovery.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Implement a distinctive undergraduate experience that prepares citizens to engage with and solve challenges of the 21st century
 - Appoint a “College of Discovery” faculty from the most distinguished professors – for both teaching and research - on campus
 - Provide them with time to envision a new first year curriculum focused on “Big Questions”
 - Create meaningful incentives for faculty to participate in the offering of the curriculum
- b. Broaden the undergraduate experience to include interdisciplinary and multilayered approaches to teaching and learning
 - Enhance opportunities to participate in research and extracurricular scholarship
 - Encourage more students to participate in service learning courses
 - Create incentives for faculty to develop interdisciplinary courses and research experiences
 - Create interdisciplinary team-taught research capstone seminars and projects, using the Honors College to develop and test a model for UM
 - Capitalize on the programs developed at the Mansfield Library to build learning communities and support student success
- c. Invest in faculty professional development for teaching excellence
 - Encourage new faculty to meet service expectations through professional development activities related to enhancing their teaching
 - Provide outstanding workshops to help faculty connect teaching with student learning
 - Develop a cadre of teaching mentors to work with faculty interested in improving their teaching
 - Provide credible training in developing learning outcomes that can be assessed
 - Expand resources to allow faculty to attend professional development training
 - Reward faculty who teach and bring innovation to courses at the introductory level
- d. Recognize and celebrate excellent teaching at UM
- e. Examine our inventory of course offerings and minimize or eliminate duplications and redundancies both within and between programs

Goal 2 – Fully integrate the College of Technology into the fabric of UM.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Increase 2- to 4-year articulation through strategic growth of 2+2 programs
 - Explore feasibility of a 2+2 tuition rate
 - Develop specific advising protocols to define the end goal for entering students
 - Focus on specific disciplines, especially those with workforce development connections
 - Partner with Student Affairs and Montana businesses to incorporate internship opportunities
- b. Enhance the mutually beneficial and enriching relationship between 2-year and 4-year programs
 - Promote opportunities for Mountain Campus students to take COT courses and for COT

- students to take courses on the Mountain Campus
- Enhance relationships with other 2-year campuses in Montana
- Strengthen relationships with Montana's Tribal Colleges
- c. Optimize affordable and accessible entry points into the University system
- d. Expand two-year education in response to changes in academic, economic, and social landscapes

Goal 3 - Improve undergraduate advising at all levels.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Determine the expected outcomes of good advising and assess the extent to which advising across departments and programs at UM is achieving these outcomes
- b. Ensure that undeclared students work with a professional advisor to facilitate success and retention
- c. Provide resources and training for faculty and professional advisors, and reward excellent advising

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SECOND INITIATIVE Cultivate Learning and Discovery at the Graduate Level

Goal 1 – Enhance graduate education, spanning research and professional programs, to transform the intellectual atmosphere at UM and create significant cultural and economic impacts in Montana.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Create a portfolio of graduate programs that capitalizes on our unique location and the intellectual and cultural resources on our campus
- b. Develop opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and scholarship
 - Enhance the annual Graduate Research Symposium
 - Identify and reduce the barriers to interdisciplinary work
 - Develop an on-campus database of faculty and student research to facilitate collaborations
- c. Ensure access to reference collections and the necessary library infrastructure to support research, scholarship, and creative activities

Goal 2 - Create a stimulating and supportive environment for graduate students that facilitates learning and positive outcomes for Montana.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Sponsor opportunities to help graduate students develop a well-rounded life through mentoring on work-life issues, teaching, and professional skills development
- b. Encourage graduate students to mentor undergraduates in research and creative scholarship
- c. Enhance the mentoring skills of faculty advisors through training programs and awards
- d. Explore linkages from two-year programs through graduate programs
- e. Create more opportunities for distance education in graduate programs

Goal 3 - Increase the proportion of graduate students enrolled to between 25-30% of all students at UM.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Develop new recruiting strategies
- b. Develop a central online admission process for submissions to multiple programs
- c. Develop strategic new programs at all credential levels
- d. Increase stipend levels for assistantships, as well as the number of awards
- e. Convert out-of-state graduate students who are awarded assistantships to resident status

Goal 4 - Increase Regional, National and International Awareness of UM graduate programs.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Utilize faculty and students as UM ambassadors for our graduate programs
 - Create an online database of faculty/student travel to facilitate recruitment
- b. Make substantive enhancements to electronic communications and public relations
- c. Develop and disseminate feature stories about graduate education and the success of graduates
 - Implement better tracking of where graduate students go after UM
 - Develop more features about graduate student activities and accomplishments
- d. Educate Montanans about the benefits of graduate education for Montana

THIRD INITIATIVE Create a Coherent Vision for Research and Creative Scholarship

Goal 1 - Work with the Research Office to implement a planning process to chart a coherent vision for research and creative activity across all Colleges and Professional Schools, and to identify and build areas of distinction.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Appoint a select visioning committee comprised of respected researchers and scholars from across the campus, including Regent's Professors
- b. The Committee will develop a 5-year plan that addresses needs and opportunities for research, scholarship, and creative activities, and that addresses how to enhance excellence for both funded and nonfunded research, scholarship and creative activities
 - Identify and prioritize areas to cultivate distinction for discovery, innovation, creative activity, and leadership
 - Recognize the special location and character of UM and the opportunities that it offers to build programs of national and international distinction
 - Recognize and value the discipline-specific differences and definitions of research and creative activities across campus by implementing and enhancing intramural programs to fund work in areas with few opportunities for extramural funding
 - Better link undergraduate and graduate education to research and creative activity
 - Continue progress and ongoing support of infrastructure and personnel in key areas that have been propelled forward by special grant programs

Goal 2 - Build and maintain appropriate infrastructure and resources to support and foster research and creative activity.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Coordinate strategic hiring of and appropriate startup packages for faculty
- b. Encourage faculty mentorship of graduate student research and creative activity
- c. Provide ongoing support and development of core physical facilities and equipment, creative activity spaces, library collections, and information technology support services
- d. Streamline procedures for research administration activities, and provide administrative support to effectively manage grants and contracts

Goal 3 – Transform discovery into application in the service of society and to stimulate the Montana economy.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Foster an entrepreneurial spirit in the research and technology communities
- b. Make available expert advice and consulting on technology transfer and patent issues
- c. Forge productive collaborations across campus with The School of Business Administration to explore strategies for taking discoveries to the marketplace
- d. Provide intramural funding to stimulate critical research related to national and global challenges

Goal 4 - Support research, scholarship, and creative activities across the natural and exact sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities, and enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Facilitate social networks to support various research and creative activity groups
- b. Coordinate opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, research and creative activities
- c. Build a public database of research and creative activity interests and experience

FOURTH INITIATIVE Build Community through Engagement and Outreach

Goal 1 - Expand the array of educational programs relevant to traditional and nontraditional students, professionals, and the general workforce – in Montana’s urban and rural areas and beyond - by enhancing effective access to UM (including COT) courses.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Continue to grow online offerings, including selected degree programs
- b. Use extended scheduling – including evenings and weekends – to better accommodate adult learners
- c. Work across the academic units and with IT to assure UM has up-to-date technology and related resources (hardware, software, personnel; See Academic Instructional Technology Strategic Plan)

Goal 2 - Respond to the growth in demand for educational opportunities for adult learners, including returning veterans, displaced workers, professionals seeking additional training, and older adults.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Work collaboratively with community partners to continue to identify and develop capacity for rapid response in workforce development
- b. Develop workforce and professional training programs, including continuing professional education workshops/seminars, targeted at strategic industries
- c. Accommodate the unique support needs of nontraditional students and those with disabilities
- d. Improve lifelong learning opportunities for older adults through continued growth of the Osher Lifelong Learning (MOLLI) program

Goal 3 - Enhance outreach and continue to expand partnerships with the K-12 sector to develop concurrent programs and to improve continuation rates of Montana high school graduates.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Collaborate with community partners in K-12 and outlying communities to expand programs
 - Place primary focus on technology to develop innovative distance/online courses and programs
 - Develop additional programs at remote sites, particularly in partnership with Bitterroot Valley residents and in strategic industries
- b. Facilitate opportunities to connect faculty who participate in the training of future teachers across disciplinary and education departments
- c. Expand bridging programs to facilitate the transition from high school to college degree programs
- d. Create opportunities to more fully participate in the ongoing professional development of teachers
- e. Continue to work to improve alignment of curricula
- f. Activate faculty across the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) to meet the rising need for excellent STEM teachers in Montana, and nationally
- g. Significantly grow dual enrollment programs

Goal 4 - Develop an Academic Affairs communications and outreach plan that enables UM’s Colleges and Professional Schools to better tell our story, both within our campuses and beyond.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Improve communication between central administration and the campus community
- b. Encourage colleges and schools to update/enhance their web sites regularly
- c. Use social networking tools to connect and converse with prospective students and their parents, alumni, donors and other community stakeholders
- d. Work with University Relations to increase content and visibility of faculty, staff and student news

- Develop “Rapid Response” teams organized around interdisciplinary themes important in the region, and coordinate with University Relations so news media and others can quickly access our faculty’s areas of expertise
- e. Continue to offer our current array of university-sponsored events, from lectures to cultural performances, *and* find new events and opportunities to showcase our faculty and programs
- Develop a “University Night” series of events on our campuses that would highlight academic programs and activities

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FIFTH INITIATIVE Embrace Diversity and Global Engagement

Goal 1 - Provide a dynamic educational environment by respecting, welcoming, encouraging and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Create a campus climate that respects and celebrates diversity, and rewards enhancement of diversity by individuals and at the department level
- b. Include in the curriculum content that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding

Goal 2 - Ensure access for American Indians and foster the preservation of the cultural integrity of American Indians.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Increase the hiring and retention of faculty and staff who are American Indians and who represent other historically underrepresented populations
- b. Incorporate diversity criteria into all outreach and recruitment plans for programs and offices that recruit undergraduate and graduate students
- c. Identify disparities in retention and graduation rates of American Indian students and develop plans to eliminate such disparities

Goal 3 - Correct inequities that persist from the historical exclusion of underrepresented populations.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Incorporate diversity criteria into outreach and recruitment plans for programs and offices that recruit undergraduate and graduate students
- b. Implement strategies to eliminate disparities in retention and graduation rates of minority students

Goal 4 - Enhance international learning and research opportunities for faculty and students.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Develop specific international recruitment strategies to increase international enrollment
- b. Prioritize existing and new opportunities for international experiences
- c. Improve the likelihood of success of international students at undergraduate and graduate levels
 - Broaden the English Language Institute (ELI) and other counseling programs
- d. Promote and expand research and educational opportunities, and build relationships with international partners in government, educational institutions and professional associations
- e. Coordinate efforts of Academic Affairs with the International Strategic Plan

SIXTH INITIATIVE Improve the Workplace Environment

Goal 1. Improve the work-life quality of the faculty and staff in Academic Affairs.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Develop a merit structure that reflects the multiplicity of tasks beyond teaching and research, such as contributing to an environment where everyone can flourish, and rewards excellence in faculty and staff performance
- b. Report national compensation benchmarks for all employees, with the goal of gaining five percentage points per year relative to the benchmarks, for the next five years
- c. Provide a living wage to all classified staff
- d. Capitalize on our unique geographic location by offering opportunities at UM for nationally marketable professional development programs

Goal 2. Create a campus climate that actively supports sustainability, including environmental responsibility, sustainable operations, and stewardship in our community.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Develop education initiatives—including both curricular content and curricular delivery methods—in support of sustainable learning
- b. Develop distinctive competencies related to sustainability that capitalize on our unique geographic location
- c. Take tangible steps to reduce the ecological footprint of Academic Affairs at UM
 - Achieve a 10% reduction in academic printing and copying in each of the next five years
 - Increase video participation in conferences and faculty/staff professional development
 - Promote carbon neutrality for academic programs on campus and for conference attendance off campus
- d. Coordinate efforts of Academic Affairs with the Sustainability Strategic Plan

Goal 3 - Maximize Technological Innovations.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Create an environment where technology supports student learning, faculty teaching and research, and administrative needs
 - Make on-going investments that optimize an appropriate mix of legacy systems and state-of-the-art technologies
 - Implement a laptop ownership program for students to ensure every student has equal access
- b. Make full use of technology to seamlessly communicate and collaborate with students and faculty
 - Establish collaboration stations around campus
 - Invest in enhanced capabilities for video conferencing for teaching and research
- c. Recognizing the tensions that arise between innovation and the needs for security, privacy, and standardization, create an atmosphere for innovation in the use of new devices and Web 2.0 capabilities
- d. Implement training for all faculty, staff, and students on the ethical application of technology
- e. Coordinate with the plan developed by the Academic Information Technology Committee