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

FINALIZED OCTOBER 30, 2009

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
College of Forestry and Conservation

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 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. 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 deliberate, open and collaborative, and informed by knowledge of external forces and expectations.
- The ASP Committee has considered the resource base we can realistically, but ambitiously, expect.
- The Committee sought the involvement of other sectors within the University.
- With the planning process and this resulting plan, the committee strived to be responsive to the needs of Montanans and to serve the public good.

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 ASP committee collected data to answer a series of environmental scan questions which 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 six key initiatives to address in the next five years.

The six strategic initiatives and associated strategies for each are designed to provide strategic direction for implementation of the initiatives. Implementation committees working with appropriate governance bodies such as the Faculty, Student, and Staff Senates, the UM Administration, the MUS Board of Regents, and others as needed to implement various actions, will be empanelled by the Provost of The University of Montana to lead the implementation efforts.
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 research university with an entrepreneurial spirit and as a major force in the evolution of Montana’s economy and culture.
• UM will ensure 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 by offering academic, professional/technical, transfer, and workforce programs that ensure proficiencies in reading, writing, and critical thinking, and 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.
FIRST INITIATIVE – **Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Undergraduate Education**

**Goal 1. Create a “Gateway to Discovery Experience” to offer a distinctive first year experience to all incoming students focused around “Big Questions” that address challenges of the 21st century.**

This first year experience will be followed by invigorated major courses of study that link learning and discovery.

**Strategies to Meet Goal 1:**

a. Provide a distinctive undergraduate experience that prepares citizens to engage with and solve challenges of the 21st century
   - Convene a “Gateway of Discovery” faculty representing the most distinguished professors – for both teaching and research - from all Colleges and Schools on campus
   - Provide faculty with time to envision a series of new courses focused on “Big Questions”
   - Create meaningful incentives for additional faculty to participate in offering courses at the introductory level and in the “Gateway” experience
   - Ensure the general education curriculum is assessed to document the extent to which it is meeting its goals

b. Broaden the undergraduate experience to include interdisciplinary and multilayered approaches to teaching and learning
   - Enhance opportunities to participate in research, service learning, and extracurricular scholarship
   - Create incentives for faculty to develop interdisciplinary courses and research experiences
   - Create interdisciplinary team-taught research capstone seminars and projects
   - 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 as appropriate
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

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. Enhance preparedness and diversity of in-coming students.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

a. Enhance relationships and coordination with the K-12 sector in Montana

b. Enhance relationships and coordination with 2-year and 4-year campuses across Montana

c. Strengthen relationships and coordination with Montana’s Tribal Colleges

Goal 4. Improve undergraduate advising at all levels.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

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 students who have not chosen a major work with a professional advisor to facilitate success and retention

c. Provide resources and training for faculty and professional advisors, and reward excellent advising

d. Coordinate these efforts with the Task Force for Student Success to meet the retention and graduation rate targets for the next five years.
SECOND INITIATIVE - Cultivate Learning and Discovery at the Graduate Level

Goal 1. Building on our current strengths, transform graduate education, spanning research and professional programs across campus, to enhance 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 across Schools and Colleges 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 Symposium to showcase all forms of research and creative activities of UM graduate students
   • 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
d. Create more opportunities for on-line learning and distance education in graduate programs
e. Explore linkages from two-year programs through graduate programs

Goal 2. Create a stimulating and supportive environment for graduate students.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

a. Sponsor opportunities to help all UM 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. Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program for graduate students
d. Enhance the mentoring skills of faculty advisors through training programs and awards
e. Create new and regular opportunities for graduate students across campus to meet and interact with each other
f. Enhance the status of the Graduate Student Association and support its growth and work on behalf of UM graduate students

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, and pay attention to transparency in the process of allocating TA lines across campus
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 4:

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
   • Engage the Alumni Office to develop and share stories of UM graduate students as part of their outreach efforts
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, scholars, and professionals from across the campus, including Regent’s Professors
b. 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, and provide training to ensure mentoring is of the highest quality
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. Provide expert advice and consulting on technology transfer and patent issues, and define a model of incentives to promote these activities
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
e. Promote UM research and creative activities, and the ways they benefit the State, region and nation
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 3:
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
   • Expand the reach of existing graduate programs into K-12 and other educational environments throughout Montana and beyond
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 and assessments
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
h. Coordinate with other strategic efforts in education underway at UM, in the region, and in the state (e.g., Montana Virtual Academy, the Professional Education Council, Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative)
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
e. 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
f. 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
  • Bring these events and experiences, as possible, to communities around Montana
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/unit level
- b. Include in the curriculum content that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding
- c. Coordinate these efforts with the UM Diversity Task Force

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
- 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
- d. Strengthen relationships with Montana’s Tribal Colleges
- e. Coordinate these efforts with the Strategic Plan for Native American and Indigenous Education

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, and faculty, staff and administrators
- b. Implement strategies to eliminate disparities in retention and graduation rates of minority students
- c. Increase the hiring and retention of faculty and staff who represent historically underrepresented populations

Goal 4. Enhance international learning and research opportunities for faculty, staff, 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 these efforts 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. Refine the reward structure to better reflect the multiplicity and complexity of tasks in the portfolio of UM faculty and staff members, including teaching, research, and service, as well as contributing to an environment where everyone can flourish  
b. Support and provide incentives for leadership training for all supervisors of faculty and staff  
c. 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  
d. Enhance policies and programs that directly affect the quality of work life at UM  
e. Provide a living wage to all classified staff  
f. 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 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 these efforts 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 personal technology ownership program for students to ensure every student has equal access  
   - Create a culture for openness, inclusiveness, and transparency in decision-making related to IT  
   - 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  

b. Create an atmosphere for innovation in the use of new devices and Web 2.0 capabilities  
c. Implement training for all faculty, staff, and students on the ethical application of technology  
d. Coordinate these efforts with the plan developed by the **Academic Information Technology Committee**