

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

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INTRODUCTION

This contemporary and ambitious Academic Strategic Plan (ASP) will guide decision-making 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 Academic Strategic Planning Committee convened at the end of spring 2008, and developed, in collaboration with the campus community, a contemporary and ambitious Academic Strategic Plan (ASP) to guide decision-making over the next five years¹. The ASP has been developed parallel to, and in close connection with, the accreditation process. The following principles guided the planning process:

- The plan focused on enhancing the effectiveness of our core mission. The emphasis of the plan was 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 was deliberate, open and collaborative, and informed by knowledge of external forces and expectations.
- The Academic Strategic Planning Committee considered the resource base we can realistically, but optimistically, expect.
- The Committee sought the involvement of other sectors within the University.
- The Committee strived to be responsive to the needs of Montanans and to serve the public good.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The ASP was aligned with the Mission Statement and Core Values of The University of Montana (<http://www.umt.edu/president/strategic.aspx>).

Mission Statement

The University of Montana-Missoula pursues academic excellence as demonstrated 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. The University also educates competent and humane professionals and informed, ethical, and engaged citizens of local and global communities; and provides basic and applied research, technology transfer, cultural outreach, and service benefiting the local community, region, State, nation, and world.

¹ The ASP Committee followed the process described in *Strategic Planning in Higher Education*, 3rd Edition, by R.A. Sevier, published by CASE Books in 2000.

Core Values

- 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 focused on both internal and external factors that influence Academic Affairs at the University. Questions for the internal scan related to the broad categories of the student body, access and affordability, the workforce related to Academic Affairs, academic programs, 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, 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 scholarship, demographic trends, and so on. The Committee also met with individuals with expertise in areas related to the environmental scan. Finally, targeted campus stakeholders were asked to respond to a short survey that asked what makes UM unique, what surprised them over the last five years, what they would most like to change, and how they hope the University will be described five years from now. After extensive review of the data, the Committee summarized the aspirations that emerged and the issues that must be addressed in the coming years to ensure we can meet those objectives. Through a series of town hall meetings, the issues were prioritized, resulting in six strategic initiatives to address in the next five years.

The six strategic initiatives have associated goals and strategies, which are designed to provide direction for implementation of the initiatives. Implementation committees will be empanelled by the Provost of to inform the implementation efforts. The implementation committees will work with appropriate governance bodies such as the Faculty, Student, and Staff Senates, the administration, the Board of Regents, and others as needed.

ASPIRATIONS FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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

In the next five years, The University of Montana will...

- Grow as a research university with an entrepreneurial spirit in the evolution of Montana's economy and culture.
- Optimize the intellectual and real-world mix of art, science, and culture by fostering an interdisciplinary and collaborative environment.
- Capitalize on our unique environment and location to lead and innovate in key areas.
- Provide a stimulating intellectual atmosphere to inspire undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff, including:
 - 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;
 - A world-class experience for graduate students;
 - 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;
 - The best online and distance education in the region; and
 - Connecting and engaging faculty and students globally.
- Lead the diversification of Montana by creating a model of campus diversity.
- Provide a model environment of information technology that advances all aspects of teaching, learning, and research.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

First Initiative – Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Undergraduate Education

Goal 1: Create a distinctive “Gateway to Discovery” experience for incoming students that focuses on “Big Questions” that address the 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 students to be engaged citizens and overcome the challenges of the 21st century.
 - i. Convene a “Gateway to Discovery” faculty representing the most distinguished professors – in both teaching and research – from all colleges and schools on campus.
 - ii. Provide faculty members with time to envision a series of new courses focused on “Big Questions.”
 - iii. Create meaningful incentives for additional faculty members to offer courses at the introductory level and in the “Gateway” experience.
 - iv. Ensure that 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.
 - i. Enhance opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research, service learning, and extracurricular scholarship.
 - ii. Create incentives for faculty members to develop interdisciplinary courses and research experiences.
 - iii. Create interdisciplinary, team-taught research capstone seminars and projects.
 - iv. Capitalize on the programs developed by the Mansfield Library to build learning communities and support student success.
- c. Invest in faculty professional development for teaching excellence.
 - i. Encourage new faculty members to meet service expectations through professional development activities related to enhancing their teaching.
 - ii. Provide outstanding workshops to help faculty members connect teaching with student learning.
 - iii. Develop a cadre of teaching mentors to work with faculty members who are interested in improving their teaching.
 - iv. Provide credible training in developing learning outcomes that can be assessed.
 - v. Expand resources to allow faculty members to attend professional development training.
 - vi. Reward faculty members who 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 engage the College of Technology.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

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

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Enhance relationships and coordination with the K-12 sector in Montana.
- b. Enhance relationships and coordination with two-year and four-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 quality advising and assess the extent to which advising across departments and programs is achieving those 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 with the Retention Implementation and Assessment Committee to meet the retention and graduation rate targets for the next five years.

Second Initiative – Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Graduate Education

Goal 1: Grow graduate education, including research and professional programs across campus, to enhance the intellectual atmosphere at UM and create cultural and economic impacts in Montana.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Create a portfolio of graduate programs from across the academic units that capitalize on our unique location and the intellectual and cultural resources on our campus.
- b. Develop opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and scholarship.
 - i. Enhance the annual Graduate Symposium to showcase all forms of research and creative activities of UM graduate students.
 - ii. Identify and reduce the barriers to interdisciplinary work.
 - iii. Develop a campus-wide 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 online and distance education in graduate programs.
- e. Explore linkages from two-year programs through graduate programs.

Goal 2: Ensure a stimulating and supportive environment for graduate students.

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. 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 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 graduate students.

Goal 3: Increase the proportion of graduate students to between 25% and 30% of all students enrolled 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 award numbers and levels for teaching assistantships (TA) and pay attention to transparency in the process of allocating TA lines across campus.
- e. Convert out-of-state graduate students who are awarded teaching assistantships to resident status.

Goal 4: Increase regional, national, and international awareness of graduate programs.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Utilize faculty members and students as ambassadors for our graduate programs.
 - i. Create an online database of faculty and 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 our graduates.
 - i. Implement better tracking of where graduate students go after graduating.
 - ii. Develop more features about graduate student activities and accomplishments.
 - iii. Engage the Office of Alumni Relations to develop and share stories of UM graduate students as part of its outreach efforts.
- d. Educate Montanans about the benefits of graduate education to the State of Montana.

Third Initiative – Create a Coherent Vision for Research and Creative Scholarship

Goal 1: Chart a coherent vision for research and creative scholarship across the colleges and professional schools and to identify and build areas of distinction.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Appoint a select visioning committee consisting of respected researchers, scholars, and professionals from across the campus, including Regents' Professors.
- b. Develop a five-year plan that addresses needs and opportunities for research and creative scholarship and how to enhance excellence for both funded and non-funded research and creative scholarship
 - i. Identify and prioritize opportunities to cultivate distinction for discovery, innovation, creative scholarship, and leadership.
 - ii. Recognize the special location and character of UM and the opportunities that it offers to build programs of national and international distinction.
 - iii. 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 fewer opportunities for extramural funding.
 - iv. Improve link between undergraduate and graduate education to research and creative scholarship.
 - v. 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 scholarship.

Strategies to Meet Goal 2:

- a. Coordinate strategic hiring of faculty and provide appropriate startup packages.
- b. Encourage faculty mentorship of graduate student research and creative scholarship, and provide training to ensure mentoring is of the highest quality.
- c. Provide ongoing support and development of core physical facilities and equipment, creative scholarship 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 to serve society and stimulate Montana's 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 the University's research and creative scholarship and the ways they benefit the State, region, and nation.

Goal 4: Support research and creative scholarship 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 scholarship
- c. Build a public database of research and creative scholarship interests and experiences.

Fourth Initiative – Build Community through Engagement and Outreach

Goal 1: Expand the array of educational programs relevant to traditional and non-traditional students, professionals, and the general workforce, in Montana’s urban and rural areas and beyond, by enhancing effective access to UM courses, 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 the University has up-to-date technology and related resources (hardware, software, personnel; See Academic Information Technology Committee Strategic Plan).

Goal 2: Respond to increased demand for educational opportunities for adult learners, including 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 and seminars targeted at strategic industries.
- c. Accommodate the unique support needs of non-traditional students.
- d. Improve lifelong learning opportunities for older adults through continued growth of the Montana Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (MOLLI).

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

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Collaborate with community partners in the K-12 sector, including those in outlying communities, to expand programs.
 - i. Place primary focus on technology to develop innovative distance and online courses and programs.
 - ii. Develop additional programs at remote sites, particularly in partnership with Bitterroot Valley residents and in strategic industries.
 - iii. Expand the reach of existing graduate programs into K-12 and other educational environments throughout Montana and beyond.
- b. Facilitate connections among faculty members who train future teachers across disciplinary and departmental lines.
- 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 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 at the University, 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 to better tell UM's story.

Strategies to Meet Goal 4:

- a. Improve communication between central administration and the campus community.
- b. Encourage colleges and schools to update and 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 regionally-important interdisciplinary themes 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.
 - i. Develop a "University Night" series of events on our campuses that would highlight academic programs and activities.
 - ii. Bring these events and experiences, as possible, to communities around Montana.

Fifth Initiative – Embrace Diversity and Global Participation

Goal 1: Provide a dynamic educational environment that respects, welcomes, encourages, and celebrates diversity in all its forms.

Strategies to Meet Goal 1:

- a. Create a campus climate that respects and celebrates diversity and rewards individuals and departments that succeed in enhancing diversity.
- b. Include in the curriculum content that enhances multicultural awareness and understanding.
- c. Coordinate these efforts with the Diversity Task Force.

Goal 2: Ensure access to education 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 members who are American Indians.
- b. Incorporate diversity criteria into 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, 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 members 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.
 - i. Broaden the English Language Institute (ELI) and other counseling programs.
- d. Promote and expand international research and educational opportunities and build relationships with international partners in government, educational institutions, and professional associations.
- e. Coordinate these efforts with the International Programs Strategic Plan.

Sixth Initiative – Improve the Workplace Environment

Goal 1: Improve the work-life quality for 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 faculty and staff members, including teaching, research, and service, as well as contributing to an environment where everyone can flourish.
- b. Provide support and incentives for leadership training for 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 educational initiatives, including both curricular content and curricular delivery methods, in support of sustainability.
- 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.
 - i. Achieve a 10% reduction in academic printing and copying in each of the next five years.
 - ii. Increase video participation in conferences and faculty/staff professional development.
 - iii. Promote carbon neutrality for academic programs on campus and for conference attendance off campus.
- d. Coordinate these efforts with the Climate Action Plan.

Goal 3: Create a technology environment that supports the work of students, faculty, and staff.

Strategies to Meet Goal 3:

- a. Create an environment where technology supports student learning, faculty teaching and research, and the administrative needs of the campus.
 - i. Make ongoing investments that optimize an appropriate mix of legacy systems and state-of-the-art technologies.

- ii. Implement a personal technology ownership program for students to ensure every student has equal access
- iii. Create a culture for openness, inclusiveness, and transparency in decision-making related to IT.
- iv. Promote use of technology for faculty and students to seamlessly communicate and collaborate with each other.
- v. Establish collaboration stations around campus.
- vi. 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.