The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan 2012

The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan is a continually evolving plan, building on the university’s Strategic Plan and its three pillars: learner-centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged. As such, it guides the forward direction of academic affairs in planning activities, resource allocation, program assessment, and the implementation of the goals stated herein. It is subject to periodic review and revision that will involve consultation with a broad range of constituents including the appropriate bodies within the Faculty Senate. The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan is one of a suite of university plans including the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan, the Business and Finance Strategic Plan, Office of Information Technology Strategic Plan, Office of the Vice President for Research Strategic Plan, the WMU Diversity and Multicultural Action Plan, as well as others.

The Academic Purpose

Since its founding in 1903, Western Michigan University has steadily grown in national and international stature, being known for innovative curricula and teaching professionals. Over the past decades, the university has distinguished itself in research and creative endeavor. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designates WMU as a “research university with high research activity” and as such WMU is one of only 76 public institutions in the nation achieving this distinction.

While research and discovery are hallmarks of WMU, we also pride ourselves on being a learner-centered institution. We promote learning and the personal development of students, faculty, and staff to succeed in a rapidly changing world. We advocate intellectual inquiry, investigation, and discovery in all undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. The University provides and models leadership in teaching and learning, human development, research and scholarly works, and public service.

Our University is centered on the individual learner. To educate our students and fulfill our broader responsibilities to prepare them for a life of learning, we secure and nurture the finest minds to serve our academic community. Our outstanding faculty and professional staff are the foundation on which we build our academic enterprise. We hire exemplary faculty who are teachers, researchers, and advisors and provide them with the support necessary to enrich our students’ lives and improve society.

Our strategic plan will guide us in developing and enhancing our distinctiveness in undergraduate education, graduate education, research, and scholarship. Seeking new understanding and applying knowledge in practical circumstances are the honor and the responsibility of graduate studies, but this focus extends more widely by emphasizing public demonstration of clinical, experimental, analytical, and inspirational projects. The goals set forth in this strategic plan are interdependent, and we will continually seek the most propitious ways to implement them. The academic purpose is preeminent and consequently resource allocation must support the academic mission.
Academic Affairs Mission

Michigan and the nation need more college-educated citizens to provide intellectual capacity and leadership. WMU dedicates its resources to attract and support outstanding students, faculty, and staff. We offer distinctive undergraduate and graduate experiences that inspire a passion for learning. Within this context and recognizing the University’s Mission and Goals, the mission of Academic Affairs is to ensure:

- Premier undergraduate and graduate learner-centered education encompassing the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions
- Excellence in teaching and learning, research, professional practice, creative endeavor, and service to the University and external community
- Leadership that advances the University’s Mission and Goals

Academic Affairs Values

We value and affirm excellence in daily actions through the following:

- Learning and freedom of inquiry
- Scholarship and creative endeavor
- Civic, social, and cultural responsibility
- Respectful, diverse, and inclusive community
- Productive student-faculty engagement
- Ethical behavior and integrity
- Shared governance
- Performance-based assessment

Goals and Strategies

Undergraduate Teaching, Learning, Research, and Scholarship

Our primary focus has been, and will remain, the education of undergraduate students. We continue to evolve the undergraduate learning experience in regard to the programs, their content, and their delivery. To this end, all undergraduate students will be engaged in a quality general education studies curriculum that provides each student with a solid foundation for lifelong learning and to be effective and engaged citizens. WMU will further develop a more personalized undergraduate educational experience, particularly for its first-year students (both freshmen and transfers). The personalized education of advanced undergraduates will be enhanced by further investments in existing programs that provide opportunities for individual or small-class instruction, such as undergraduate research, honors education, study abroad, and experiential learning. The humanities have been and will continue to be central to undergraduate education.
Goal 1. Offer undergraduate programs that will provide graduates with the distinction necessary to be highly successful in their lives and careers

Strategy 1.1: The faculty will continually examine curricula and course content, including general education, to ensure that the following skills, knowledge, and attitudes are integrated into undergraduate education:

- Global understanding and sensitivity
- Communication skills
- Critical thinking
- Environmental sustainability
- Diversity and inclusion
- Civic and social responsibility
- Health and wellness
- Quantitative and reasoning skills
- Artistic literacy
- Information literacy

Strategy 1.2: Graduate undergraduate students who have completed an original project, either individually or in a team, in science, scholarship, or creative expression in their major or minor

Strategy 1.3: Graduate undergraduate students who have acquired a familiarity with a language other than English

Strategy 1.4: Develop and increase the use of current and emerging technologies in curricula and co-curricula matters

Strategy 1.5: Assess student learning in terms of program objectives, using the knowledge gained for continuous improvement

Strategy 1.6: Use a consultative and integrated program review process for creating, sustaining, growing, and eliminating academic programs

Strategy 1.7: Provide support services to ensure success at WMU for special and non-traditional student populations

Strategy 1.8: Institute a comprehensive academic advising program, including improving staff-to-student ratios to maintain interactions with students from recruitment to graduation and throughout their careers

Strategy 1.9: Increase the number of professionally trained staff to assist students in their learning and personal development

Strategy 1.10: Embrace emerging technology and emerging pedagogy facilitating a distinctive learning environment
Strategy 1.11: Increase interdisciplinary teaching and interdisciplinary minors and majors to provide students with the knowledge to work in the world

Strategy 1.12: Investigate and implement experiences that result in students having more self-direction and fostering life-long learning

Strategy 1.13: Increase participation in study abroad opportunities

Strategy 1.14: Integrate experiential learning into academic programs [formerly Strategy 8.2]

Goal 2. Establish a robust undergraduate enrollment management plan that recruits and retains a diverse, outstanding student body consistent with a learner-centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged university

Strategy 2.1: Manage enrollment capacity by determining the capacity of each program, matching enrollment to capacity, or as appropriate, increasing or decreasing capacity to ensure quality education and maximize resource utilization

Strategy 2.2: Investigate, and if possible implement, differential tuition to address the demand for and/or the cost of offering the programs

Strategy 2.3: Increase the number and value of endowed merit-based scholarships (Medallion, President, college, unit, etc.)

Strategy 2.4: Increase and refine recruiting efforts to include regional, national, and international emphases

Strategy 2.5: Increase alumni and current student involvement in recruiting

Strategy 2.6: Increase recruiting at the department/school level

Strategy 2.7: Increase the number of students transferring from community colleges, especially through the development and use of joint admittance programs and reverse articulation

Strategy 2.8: Enhance the university environment to facilitate an increase in international students

Strategy 2.9: Analyze retention and continually refine recruitment and retention activities based on graduation outcomes
Graduate Teaching, Learning, Research, and Scholarship

WMU is committed to excellence in graduate programs. WMU offers a select set of master's and doctoral programs where there is a demand for the program and where the graduates of the program are nationally competitive. Having fidelity to our learner-centered, discovery driven mission, graduate and doctoral assistantships enhance the teaching and research functions of the institution.

**Goal 3.** Offer distinctive graduate programs that prepare students to be successful in their lives and careers, and position WMU as a leader in graduate education

**Strategy 3.1:** Pioneer new configurations of graduate certificate and degree programs

**Strategy 3.2:** Promote cross-college interdisciplinary programs supported by an effective governance and reward structure

**Strategy 3.3:** Ensure a firm foundation in established modes of inquiry and discovery

**Strategy 3.4:** Pursue additional professional degree offerings in the health sciences

**Strategy 3.5:** Assess student learning in terms of program objectives, using the knowledge gained for continuous improvement

**Strategy 3.6:** Use a consultative and integrated program review process for creating, sustaining, growing, and eliminating academic programs

**Strategy 3.7:** Provide support services to ensure success at WMU for special and nontraditional student populations

**Strategy 3.8:** Embrace emerging technology and emerging pedagogy facilitating a distinctive learning environment

**Goal 4.** Recruit and retain outstanding graduate students that reflect the diversity of our society

**Strategy 4.1:** Ensure a synergistic, mutually beneficial relationship between graduate and undergraduate programs

**Strategy 4.2:** Increase external funding from grants and contracts, as well as from gift funds, to support graduate students during their entire program of study, including graduate assistantships, fellowships, project support, and conference attendance

**Strategy 4.3:** Develop an integrated recruiting effort that is (a) regional, national and international, (b) supports all graduate programs through quality Web sites, publications, and advertisements, and (c) involves faculty members

**Strategy 4.4:** Establish a robust graduate enrollment management plan that defines, shapes and retains the student body and is consistent with a public, learner-centered, discovery driven, globally engaged university
Strategy 4.5: Manage enrollment capacity by determining the capacity of each program, matching enrollment to capacity or, as appropriate, increasing or decreasing capacity to ensure quality education and to maximize resource utilization.

Strategy 4.6: Investigate, and if possible implement, differential tuition to address the demand for and/or the cost of offering the programs.
Research and Creative Endeavors

Research, creative endeavor, and scholarship are products of inquiry, discovery and creativity and are expected from all traditionally ranked faculty members. To enhance regional and national competitiveness, traditionally ranked faculty members, where appropriate, are expected to compete successfully for external funding.

Goal 5. Produce outstanding research and creative works that enhance society

Strategy 5.1: Provide sufficient time and resources for faculty to pursue research and creative endeavors

Strategy 5.2: Provide leadership for initiating and developing regional, national, and international research partnerships

Strategy 5.3: Increase library collections to support existing programs, new ventures in research, and new academic programs

Strategy 5.4: Recognize, publicize, and reward the scholarly works and creative accomplishments of our faculty and students

Strategy 5.5: Establish an electronic repository for research and scholarly communication

Strategy 5.6: Leverage newly established University Center for the Humanities to further facilitate interdisciplinary humanities and scholarly activities and attract extramural funding (Consider establishing an Institute for the Humanities to facilitate interdisciplinary humanities scholarly activities)

Strategy 5.7: Develop an information technology business plan to support research and creative activities

Goal 6. Obtain external funding to increase the visibility of and support the discovery driven research and creative endeavors of students, faculty, and professional staff

Strategy 6.1: Create and expand research offices and support infrastructure to assist faculty in securing and executing state, regional, and national grants and contracts

Strategy 6.2: Triple the investment in internal competitive seed funds to increase the number of principal investigators

Strategy 6.3: Increase the visibility and expand the number of internationally-recognized, externally-funded research centers and institutes

Strategy 6.4: Hire faculty in research clusters

Strategy 6.5: Increase funding for research infrastructure by collecting a higher percentage of the allowable indirect costs
The Academic Community

One of WMU’s strengths is its academic community. As an academic community we expect our colleagues to adhere to the academic affairs mission and values. We also expect that they will dedicate themselves to excellence in teaching, learning, research, scholarship, creative and artistic endeavor, professional practice, and service. As faculty we are known by many titles: teacher, researcher, clinician, artist, scholar, scientist as well as many other appropriate descriptors. Each member of the academic community will strengthen her or his own capabilities and mentor and respect one another thereby elevating the stature of the university.

Goal 7. Flourish as an academic community that shares common purpose and pride in accomplishing our goals

Strategy 7.1: Promote cultural change across the University so that every individual promotes a learner-centered environment that leads to student success

Strategy 7.2: Through the accomplishment of the first six goals, build a learner-centered, discovery driven, globally engaged academic community comprised of faculty who are esteemed as both teachers and scholars

Strategy 7.3: Increase diversity and inclusivity within the student body, faculty, and staff through the recruitment, advancement, and retention of a pluralistic community

Strategy 7.4: Increase the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty by 25 per year, and the associated infrastructure by utilizing:

- enrollment revenue
- external funding

EUP business model to strategically support:

- expanded funded research in specific areas
- work with students on scholarly activities and research projects, and
- improve faculty to student ratios to enhance the quality of the educational experience

Strategy 7.5: Mentor new faculty members and provide them with the support needed to ensure promotion and tenure

Strategy 7.6: Increase and train staff as necessary to support the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan

Strategy 7.7: Enhance investment in the professional development of faculty and staff

Strategy 7.8: Collaborate with the leadership and faculty at community colleges to strengthen articulation
The Greater Community

WMU exists in a greater community that is regional, national, and international. Besides educating students and engaging in research, we are dedicated to enriching and improving the greater society through the knowledge and efforts of our faculty, staff, and students. WMU has been a globally engaged university for over half a century, taking pride in how we have effected change from Africa to the United States. Through Extended University Programs (EUP), both in-state and worldwide, we place a special importance on supporting the greater community.

Goal 8. Enhance the greater community and society by applying our university’s knowledge, talents, and energies through service and outreach

   Strategy 8.1: In partnership with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, create meaningful, lifelong relationships with alumni and donors that celebrate our legacy, inspire our future, and engage them in the life of the University

   Strategy 8.2: Enhance service learning to foster student citizenship and learning as well as to benefit the greater community

   Strategy 8.3: Provide volunteer services to assist the greater community

   Strategy 8.4: Assist the greater community in creating jobs and economic development

   Strategy 8.5: Partner with the community to enhance the University’s mission of research, instruction, and service where the partnerships are mutually beneficial

   Strategy 8.6: Working collaboratively, academic colleges and Extended University Programs will offer off-campus and on-line programs

We offer this text as a prudent course of action that builds on the long tradition of this university. We as a university are at a crossroad, requiring that we as a community rise to the occasion and seize opportunities for excellence. We all are WMU. We control our common destiny and we are commonly accountable. By taking this bold action now, we ensure our place as leaders in higher learning in the public domain.