STRATEGIC PLAN
2012-2017

STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO
MISSION STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

Minnesota State University, Mankato promotes learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region, and the global community.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISION

Student Affairs advances the mission of Minnesota State Mankato by:

- Fostering learning and development.
- Supporting student success.
- Preparing students to be leaders in a global society.

GLOBAL INVOLVED SUCCESSFUL ENGAGED COLLABORATIVE
A STATEMENT FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS & ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Student Affairs at Minnesota State University, Mankato strives to provide excellent services and programs to support student learning and persistence. During the 2012-2013 academic year, members of the Student Affairs division actively engaged in the strategic planning process. The purpose was to examine the critical role of Student Affairs in creating learning environments that support student success.

A Strategic Planning Team was charged with gathering input from internal and external stakeholders. Participants were asked to share opinions and suggestions related to projected student needs, divisional contributions to institutional mission, and the core functions of Student Affairs. Findings from discussion groups and surveys were used to identify emerging themes and goals.

The result is a forward-thinking Strategic Plan that honors meaningful traditions, validates core functions, identifies new initiatives, and eliminates inefficiencies. Special effort was made to align the work of Student Affairs with the mission, vision, goals, and strategic priorities of Minnesota State Mankato and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

The units under Student Affairs will develop strategies and measurable objectives to achieve the goals identified in the strategic planning process. Greater emphasis will be placed on marketing and communication. The 2012-2017 Student Affairs Strategic Plan provides a road map for the next five years to inform decision making, short- and long-term planning, investment, and resource allocation.

Each staff member’s commitment to these goals strengthens the student experience, creates a positive work environment, and propels our division forward in a synergic fashion. We are committed to providing students with meaningful opportunities to develop the confidence and skills necessary to thrive in times of dramatic change.

David P. Jones, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
OFFICES WITHIN STUDENT AFFAIRS

Campus Recreation, 118 Myers Field House  
mnsu.edu/campusrec

Career Development Center, 209 Wigley Administration Center  
mnsu.edu/cdc

Centennial Student Union & Student Activities, 220 Centennial Student Union  
csu.mnsu.edu  
mnsu.edu/activities

Counseling Center, 245 Centennial Student Union  
mnsu.edu/counseling

New Student & Family Programs, 103 Preska Residence Community  
mnsu.edu/newstudent

Residential Life, 111 Carkoski Commons  
mnsu.edu/reslife

Student Conduct, 228 Wigley Administration Center  
mnsu.edu/conduct

Student Health Services, 21 Carkoski Commons  
mnsu.edu/shs

Undergraduate Admissions, 122 Taylor Center  
mnsu.edu/admissions

University Security, 222 Wiecking Center  
mnsu.edu/security
STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

Mike Altomari, Undergraduate Admissions
Marla Bock, Administrative Support
Katie Carlson, Graduate Researcher
Dr. Mary Dowd, Facilitator
Dr. Steven Gilbert, Counseling Center
Joel Jensen, University Security
Laura Maki, Graduate Researcher
Wendy Schuh, Student Health Services
Ryan Stevens, Campus Recreation
Nikki Stock, New Student & Family Programs
Kristin Underwood, Career Development Center
Jamie Van Boxel, Residential Life
Greg Wilkins, Centennial Student Union & Student Activities
Work on the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan for the Division of Student Affairs at Minnesota State University, Mankato formally started May 31, 2012 at a Student Affairs Council retreat led by Dr. David Jones, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. Participants included Nicole Stock, Director of New Student & Family Programs; Dr. Mary Dowd, Director of Student Conduct; Suzanne Dugan, Director of University Security; Dr. Steven Gilbert, Department Chair for the Counseling Center; Cynthia Janney, Director of Residential Life; Brian Jones, Director of Undergraduate Admissions; Todd Pfingsten, Director of Campus Recreation; Wendy Schuh, Director of Student Health Services; Pamela Weller, Director of the Career Development Center; Dr. Laurie Woodward, Director of the Centennial Student Union and Student Activities. Administrative support was provided by Marla Bock.

The six-hour retreat afforded Student Affairs leadership an occasion to conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the division. We examined the drivers for change in higher education, most notably student attrition, degree completion rates, tuition hikes, declining state appropriations, and changing demographics. The team identified internal and external stakeholders whose participation would be critical to drafting a Strategic Plan that uniquely reflected current and projected wants and needs of students and other constituents impacted by our work.

A call for volunteers to serve on a Strategic Planning Team was issued to all staff in Student Affairs. Each department selected a representative from their area. Representatives were responsible for attending planning meetings, facilitating focus groups, soliciting departmental input, reviewing relevant materials.
and reports, analyzing data, identifying issues and emerging themes, writing goals, and ensuring all members of the Student Affairs division had a voice in determining the future direction of Student Affairs.

Immediately after receiving their charge from Dr. David Jones in early November, the Strategic Planning Team discussed the importance of a needs assessment inventory that would measure divisional strengths and target areas for improvement. Dr. Mary Dowd, facilitator of the Strategic Planning Team, provided copies of institutional and MnSCU system mission and vision statements, strategic priorities, global solution goals, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) criteria, and institutional learner outcomes for reference throughout the process.

The following questions were developed to provide a framework for inquiry:

1. What will students want and need 5-10 years from now?
2. How does Student Affairs advance the missions of Minnesota State Mankato and the MnSCU System?
3. What should Student Affairs continue doing as the core of our work?
4. What should Student Affairs start doing?
5. What should Student Affairs stop doing?

The Strategic Planning Team collected data from a number of sources—including students, faculty, staff, and community members, in the form of open-ended questions administered via focus groups and online surveys. To support full participation and transparency,
staff in Student Affairs received a link to access all documents on the Strategic Planning SharePoint site. Strategic Planning Team representatives held staff meetings to solicit input on the Strategic Plan.

In addition, Greg Wilkins led several focus groups to hear from student leaders, undergraduate students, graduate student staff, and members of recognized student organizations, including Greek chapters. Jamie Van Boxel organized focus groups of students and staff in the residence communities. Student Conduct/Student Affairs Office staff Katie Carlson and Laura Maki facilitated focus groups with graduate students and Institutional Diversity. Notes from departmental meetings and focus groups were uploaded to the SharePoint site for everyone in the Student Affairs division to view.

In January 2013, an email invitation with a Survey Monkey link was sent to students from Dr. David Jones. A separate email invitation from Dr. Jones with a link to a similar survey was sent to stakeholders, which provided input from faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and community members. A definition of Student Affairs was intentionally left out to help gauge general awareness and understanding of Student Affairs programs and services.
Responses from departmental meetings, focus groups, and surveys were analyzed by two coders using a qualitative approach derived from grounded theory. The initial coding process involved reading through all of the responses to the survey and focus group notes looking for similarities and differences. Initial coding was followed by focused coding, which entailed synthesizing the data and identifying emerging themes. The themes identified were verified against themes developed by an independent group who examined the data. Based on these processes, the coders determined the themes fairly represented the data collected.

Students will want and need the following in the next 5-10 years: technical expertise, critical thinking skills, quality online courses, affordable tuition and fees, online textbooks or rentals, state-of-the-art facilities, personal and career guidance, accurate advising, support services, fast and exemplary customer service, tutoring, involvement and leadership opportunities, internships and other field experiences, careers related to majors, positive relationships with faculty and staff, timely graduation.

Student Affairs contributes to institutional mission by advocating for student success, providing learning
opportunities outside the classroom, assessing student needs, promoting retention and degree completion, offering advising, enriching the college experience, offering exceptional support and resources, and promoting health and safety.

The core function of Student Affairs is to prepare students for meaningful careers and instruct students in life skills such as critical thinking, stress management, time management, and cross-cultural communication. Student Affairs also provides and connects students with resources, programs, and offices that bolster curricular and co-curricular achievement. In that process, Student Affairs cultivates relationships between students, staff, professors, parents, and community members. Additionally, Student Affairs contributes to campus climate and positive student culture.

Suggested Student Affairs enhancements: expand services for nontraditional students, create 24-hour study spaces, offer healthy food, increase awareness of Student Affairs, improve customer service, increase attendance at events, address factors related to retention, and step up community outreach.

Suggested Student Affairs reductions: scale back activities that do not have clear learner outcomes, consider consolidation of departments, focus on core services rather than areas outside expertise, and avoid duplication of effort across departments.

The last step in the strategic planning process involved examining and synthesizing responses to make meaning out of data. The team considered the big picture and how Student Affairs plays a critical role in the MnSCU system’s and Minnesota State Mankato’s mission, vision, strategic priorities, and learner outcomes. Discussion led to formulation of tentative goals that were presented and critiqued across the division. After reviewing feedback, goals were finalized and formally approved by the Student Affairs Council.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT
To ensure continual quality improvement, assessment must be imbedded in Student Affairs practice and culture. Assessment results impact resource allocation, programming decisions, staffing levels, and the launching of new initiatives. Each department within Student Affairs will operationalize the Strategic Plan by developing departmental goals in alignment with divisional goals. The annual assessment report submitted by each department will also include documentation of professional development efforts to keep staff current with best practices. While year-end reporting is important, emphasis will be placed on continually measuring and enhancing exemplary service and programming designed to improve student learning and personal growth.

NEXT STEPS
The goals specified in this report are the cornerstone of the Student Affairs Strategic Plan. Over the course of the next five years, the goals will enable us to identify quantifiable objectives, action plans, and key performance indicators that support the mission, vision, and values of Minnesota State Mankato. Outcomes help us tell our story and articulate how the expertise of Student Affairs makes a positive difference in the lives of students. In 2016, another Strategic Planning Team will be formed to revise the plan.
THE GOALS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS ARE TO:

- Be a leader in nationally recognized enrollment management practices that increase student recruitment, retention, and timely degree completion.

- Provide opportunities for students to develop attributes and transferable skills that will enable them to achieve life-long success in a global community.

- Support academic success through collaboration with faculty.

- Promote a diverse, engaged, and civil campus community.

- Deliver effective services that use innovative technologies and value personal connections.