



An Intentional Path Forward

ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

2015 - 2018

A Core Component of
Our Integrated Strategic Planning

PROVOST'S MESSAGE



*"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."
- Benjamin Franklin*

Dear Colleagues,

Public higher education is in the midst of a fascinating era. The proliferation of educational options and new credentials, economic pressures and sustainable models, expectations for student success and educational equity, and shifting demographics and global competitiveness are among the prime issues confronting universities nationwide.

Yet while the landscape of public higher education continues to evolve, the basic responsibilities and values held by Minnesota State University, Mankato remain constant. We remain committed to our institutional mission to promote learning and to preparing our graduates for work, life and citizenship. We hold true to responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us, both public and private.

And as we prepare to celebrate the University's 150th anniversary, we see fit to honor our institution's long tradition of sound and thorough planning with a new, dynamic and integrated Academic Master Plan.

Of course, integrated planning is required by the new Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation, adopted in January 2013. But I am honored to say that we seized this opportunity to dig deep and examine our programs and operations in new ways. We made the most of this chance to pause and create a thoughtful, intentional definition of the kind of institution we want to be, carefully selecting where our growth should occur, identifying opportunities for even greater success.

In short, we set out to define how we want to be known as a large and comprehensive university, with graduate and undergraduate programs, right now and in the future.

A set of shared principles or values not previously associated with any official plan or document of the University, but clearly part of our character as an institution since our beginning, ascended during both the academic degree program planning and work of the task forces. These principles will be points of deliberative dialogue as we advance our plan:

- Liberal Arts and Applied Learning
- Entrepreneurial Thinking and Innovation
- Leadership and Global Awareness
- Student Engagement and Success
- Diversity and Equity
- Academic Advising and Mentoring
- Teaching Excellence and Innovation
- Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity
- Information Technology and Competency
- Fiscal Responsibility and Stewardship

Furthermore, twelve overarching areas of distinction—academic, research, industry—for our University, by 2018, emerged and set the stage for further conversation, clarification, and confirmation over the next three years, and as we look toward our next 150 years. In alphabetical arrangement, they are:

- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources
- Business, Management and Financial Services
- Creative and Performing Arts
- Data and Information Sciences
- Education and Human Services
- Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology
- Global Communications, Media and Information Technologies
- Health Care and Biomedical Sciences
- Integrative and Applied Disciplines
- Marketing, Sales and Professional Services
- Public Policy and Administration
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics

Our formal planning process spanned 18 months, included many formal retreats and meetings, and—perhaps most critical—involved careful work by small groups and individuals to shape and hone the most strategic and ambitious plan possible for each area. I invite you to join me in embracing, implementing and advancing our plan to achieve new levels of greatness for Minnesota State University, Mankato and the students we serve.

Sincerely,

Marilyn J. Wells, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Academic Master Plan 2015–2018 is the culmination of the University’s first-ever integrated academic planning effort, empowering the University to prepare for and shape the future—to develop an intentional path forward.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The integrated academic planning initiative began in 2012–2013 through a series of guided discussions and workshops with the University’s Council of Deans, expanding in Fall 2013 to university and shared governance (bargaining unit) leadership. In February 2014, the integrated academic planning process was introduced to the broader university community.

Seminal communication pieces were drafted and developed. A brochure, *Academic Planning: A Core Component of Our Integrated Strategic Planning*, highlighted the proposed planning model, general approach, plan components and timeline. A companion graphic, *A Diagram of Integrated Strategic Planning at Minnesota State Mankato*, illustrated how the integrated academic master plan would intentionally link the academic core of the University with other strategic planning efforts and depicted vertical integration with the University’s Strategic Priorities and System’s Strategic Framework. A central piece to the planning work of academic degree programs was proposed, the *Academic Degree Program Planning Tool*.

To support consensus building, community involvement, data utilization, shared governance and transparency, a dedicated academic planning website was created, www.mnsu.edu/academicplan, with all of the planning documents and additional resources. Campus and community listening and visioning sessions were held to further communicate and shape the planning process. Four Extraordinary Education Task Forces were launched focused in areas of high priority and interest to the campus community: Teaching Excellence and Innovation; Academic Advising; Academic Engagement Programs and Opportunities; and Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity. The task force areas of focus cut across multiple, if not all, units within the Division of Academic Affairs and beyond.

Clearly, the academic master planning process was one of great energy and intensity. Faculty, staff and students engaged in vigorous analysis, deliberative dialogue and big ideas for the future within all four task forces and across 47 academic departments and six academic colleges.

ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Academic Master Plan articulates big ideas that emerged from the six academic colleges through their respective academic departments and programs. Selected highlights are to:

- Introduce new and emerging fields of study to draw upon faculty expertise and university resources, and to meet new advances in a discipline or solve pressing problems in our society.
- Initiate redesigned academic programs to respond to new standards or developments in a field, or growing student and marketplace demand.
- Support proposed growth of academic programs positioned to expand capacity, meet growing demand, or to become programs of prestige or distinction.
- Transition programs identified to sunset to make way for new, redesigned, and growth programs.
- Expand integrative and applied disciplines and programs, to develop the broad-based and critical skills being asked for, by students and employers, today.
- Prepare for new program directions, with foci on graduate education, particularly professional master’s programs, and undergraduate and graduate certificate programs.
- Advance student enrollment, retention, and completion efforts, across all programs, with a keen focus on success for a growing diverse student body.
- Establish novel collaborations within colleges, between colleges, and beyond with other post-secondary institutions to stimulate idea-generation and provide the necessary organizational support for integrative and applied academic programs and learning experiences.
- Develop and grow continuing education and customized training programs and services that meet the real-world needs of community businesses and organizations, regional industry, and the State.
- Launch new Centers—academic and research—for faculty and students, community and industry partners, to engage in advanced study, project-based learning, pioneering and applied research, creative activity and grant and contract acquisition.
- Garner resources through new grants, contracts, private gifts and revenue-generating opportunities to achieve high priority personnel, facility, equipment and technology needs, such as increasing need for collaborative learning environments and use of simulation technology across disciplines.

The Academic Master Plan also presents the sixteen strategic recommendations from the four Extraordinary Education Task Forces. In summary:

Teaching Excellence and Innovation

- Recommendation #1: Engagement to transform effective teaching into excellent and innovative teaching.
- Recommendation #2: Become a partner for life in our students' education.
- Recommendation #3: Provide infrastructure and support for teaching and learning excellence and innovation.
- Recommendation #4: Ensure equity in educational opportunities.

Academic Advising

- Recommendation #1: Raise the visibility and importance of advising.
- Recommendation #2: Implement a university-wide academic advising model.
- Recommendation #3: Implement advising technological tools to full capacity.
- Recommendation #4: Develop a university-wide, consistent assessment process for academic advising.

Academic Engagement Programs and Opportunities

- Recommendation #1: Ramp up the high-impact practices we are currently employing.
- Recommendation #2: Deepen efforts to support academic engagement within the classroom.
- Recommendation #3: Centralize academic advising and engagement: Advising as Engagement.
- Recommendation #4: Engage students in continuous dialogue about academic engagement.

Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity

- Recommendation #1: Increase the engagement of faculty in research, scholarly and creative activities.
- Recommendation #2: Infuse student involvement in research, scholarly and creative activities throughout their studies.
- Recommendation #3: Report, market, and assess research, scholarly and creative activities.
- Recommendation #4: Make targeted changes to the financial, physical, and organizational infrastructures supporting research, scholarly and creative activity.

Examination of the highlights point to two of the purposes set forth at the outset of the planning process. Those were: 1) to "intentionally define the kind of institution we want to be" and 2) "to enable us to select carefully where our growth should occur and seize opportunities for greater success." In short, to define what we want to be known for as a regional, comprehensive university in south central Minnesota.

ADVANCING OUR ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

With the Academic Master Plan completed, the campus community is ready to move to implementation. Given that this is the University's first-ever integrated academic planning effort, there is curiosity and excitement in moving from conceptual to tactical. The Academic Master Plan clearly offers numerous recommendations while also bringing to bear areas for refinement, questions to ask, and ideas to explore.

The Academic Master Plan, and the multi-phased integrated academic planning that occurred, enabled the campus community to intentionally look at how we have delivered on a nearly 150-year-old commitment to promote learning and how it will advance that commitment into the next 150 years. The campus community is invited to read the Academic Master Plan 2015–2018 in full (www.mnsu.edu/academicplan), but more importantly, to become engaged in the implementation and advancement of the plan to achieve new levels of greatness.



September 25, 2015