

## ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN 2015-2018: MID-POINT PROGRESS REPORT

In August 2015, Minnesota State University, Mankato launched a new, dynamic, and integrated Academic Master Plan “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.”

Since the launch of our Academic Master Plan, we have already achieved success in many areas, through the ongoing enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication of faculty, staff, and students across campus. Therefore, we are pleased to “tell our story” of how we are advancing our three-year Academic Master Plan, by highlighting our progress at mid-point.

### SHARED PRINCIPLES

A set of shared principles, 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 four Extraordinary Education Task Forces. When our Academic Master Plan 2015 – 2018 was launched, we shared that these principles would be points of deliberative dialogue as we advanced our plan.

In Year 1 of implementation, our Planning Sub-meet engaged in action on these Academic Principles, and affirmed the shared principles through a campus “pulse” survey, Joint Budget, Planning and Assessment & Evaluation Sub-Meet review, and Planning Sub-Meet recommendation for adoption.

- 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

### AREAS OF DISTINCTION – ACADEMIC, RESEARCH, INDUSTRY

Additionally, through our academic master planning, 12 overarching Areas of Distinction – Academic, Research, and Industry – emerged and set the stage for further conversation, clarification, and confirmation over the time horizon of the Academic Master Plan and as we celebrate our sesquicentennial and look toward our next 150 years.

In Year 1 of implementation, the Planning Sub-meet recommended that the “Areas of Distinction” conversation be anchored in Academic Affairs. In a series of summer 2016 retreats, the University’s Council of Deans engaged in small group discussions, roundtable discussions, large group debriefing and consensus building, yielding a revised version, with Areas of Distinction distinguished as “current” and “emerging.” Subsequently, this version was shared at the December 2016 Department Chairs’ and Directors’ breakfast meeting for discussion, reflection. Feedback was integrated to offer a version for further deliberation.

Next steps for continuing to affirm and hone our Areas of Distinction include broader campus and external community communication and engagement. In alphabetical arrangement, they are:

#### *Current Areas of Distinction*

- Business Management and Financial Services
- Creative and Performing Arts
- Education and Professional Services
- Engineering, Manufacturing, and Technology
- Food and Natural Resources
- Gender and Intercultural Studies
- Communication
- Health and Biomedical Science
- Public Policy, Administration, and Services

#### *Emerging Areas of Distinction*

- Agriculture
- Data and Information Science
- Marketing and Sales
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Of special significance, and relative to Agriculture as an emerging area of distinction, in September 2015, our University announced our new certification as a “Non-Land Grant College of Agriculture” (NLGCA) by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) – a distinction held even today by less than 100 universities nationwide. This was an intentional and strategic accomplishment for our growing focus on expanding our academic programs, applied and integrative research, and partnerships in agriculture, food, and natural resources. Agriculture spans a continuum from production, processing, manufacturing, professional services, research, technology, education, transportation, and more, representing our other current and emerging areas of distinction.

This designation also aligns with the University’s early and active participation in GreenSeam, Greater Mankato Growth’s recently branded agriculture business initiative and aspiration to become known as the premier ag-business epicenter in the United States. Agriculture is currently the largest business industry segment within our region with more than \$15.3 billion in sales annually.

## ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM & COLLEGE HIGHLIGHTS

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

- Our six Colleges proposed 18 new programs for the next three years. Four were fully approved by the close of 2016. Examples from the College of Science, Engineering and Technology are a new BAS in Computer Application Development, a new certificate in Project-based Engineering, and a new certificate in Environmental Geology, which relates to the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources area of distinction.
- Of the 51 program plans for redesign, 42 were achieved — over 80% success in Year 1 of the plan period. The College of Education, alone, successfully redesigned all 17 programs identified in its plan. The College of Allied Health and Nursing put forward 10 programs for revision, and has already achieved eight.
- In the College of Arts and Humanities, the Department of Music faculty redesigned the entire curriculum, including updating individual courses across six programs and suspending low-enrollment programs.
- The addition of a second advisor in the College of Arts and Humanities now enables all first-year students to receive dedicated advising, a strategy proven to support increased retention.
- A new Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, organizationally housed in and led by the College of Business, will be located off-campus in Mankato's Old Town, immersing students, faculty, and business partners in the real world of startups, revitalization, competition and growth.
- In the College of Education, the Department of Special Education received a \$1.06 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs to help address the state-identified shortage of teachers qualified to work with infants, toddlers and children with disabilities.
- The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences focused on expanding continuing education and customized training programs, with the Organizational Effectiveness Research Group receiving grant funding to run a supervisory development center.
- The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences also found new departmental homes for two programs — the BS in Social Studies, and BS in Applied Organizational Studies. Both programs are now better positioned for enrollment growth and student success.
- Across the Colleges, eight programs were approved for additional locations, and one for new online delivery.

## EXTRAORDINARY EDUCATION TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS

The Academic Master Plan also presented sixteen strategic recommendations from the four Extraordinary Education Task Forces, and we are seeing measurable progress and achievements.

In the Academic Master Plan 2015-2018, student retention and completion were identified across three Extraordinary Education Task Forces (Academic Advising, Teaching Excellence and Innovation, and Academic Engagement Programs and Opportunities) as needing improvement. Therefore, it is particularly exciting and impactful that:

- Our University was competitively selected by the American Association for State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) to be among a select cohort of member institutions, one of 44 nationwide (top 10%), for the "Re-Imagining the First Year of College (RFY) Project" — a distinguished national three-year initiative, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USA Funds, to help institutions make transformative changes in the interest of improving student success and retention, especially for low income, first generation, and students of color.
- Our RFY campus implementation plan includes seven signature strategies — redesigns of the first year advising model and first-year seminar, gateway courses, financial literacy, supplemental instruction, peer mentoring programs, micro-grants and pay-it-forward grants, campus communications transformation, and a student data council.
- Additionally, the University hired a Learning Communities Program Coordinator; accepted 17 Learning Community Proposals for 2016-17; and increased funding to support capacity to serve 408 students (an increase of 23.5%).

In the recommendations from the Research, Scholarly, & Creative Activity Task Force, activities are more likely to yield exciting new ideas — and to take place at all — when the participating colleagues are diverse, and both the space and funding are adequate to support and breadth and depth of activity. To those ends:

- The College of Graduate Studies and Research has partnered with The Academic Network to recruit graduate students from historically black colleges and universities as well as institutions serving Hispanic students.
- Spring 2017 will see the launch of the Graduate Online Symposium showcasing research, scholarly and creative activities.
- Our indirect cost policy was made more transparent, and financial reallocation will support a new grant specialist in the Research and Sponsored Programs office to further grow our grants and contracts.

As we take this time at mid-point of our Academic Master Plan to assess our progress and achievements, it also is important that we take time to celebrate the involved and careful work of small groups and individuals across our campus to achieve our most strategic and ambitious academic plan possible. Now, as we look to Year 2 and Year 3 of our Academic Master Plan, and our new University Strategic Directions 2016 – 2021, we will continue to embrace, implement and advance our plan. Together, we can propel Minnesota State University, Mankato forward for the students we serve.