

Section 3: SSU's Planning Efforts

The University Strategic Plan

At the time of the Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR) team visit, SSU had been engaged in developing a strategic plan for the university through the work of the University Planning Steering Committee (UPSC). A draft of the plan was approved by the UPSC in March of 2008, shortly before the team visit. The draft plan has since been widely disseminated to the university community for commentary and input via Academic Senate Committees and prominent link to the plan from the university's home web page. The CPR visiting team expressed concern at the time of the visit that further consultative work needed to be done in relation to adoption of the University Strategic Plan (USP), stating that "all of these planning efforts must work in close correspondence with the faculty governance system (CFR 3.11) to insure that the faculty exercises 'effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure both academic quality and the appropriate maintenance of the institution's educational purposes and character.'" Thus, the faculty recommended that a comment period on the plan be allowed to extend throughout the Fall 2008 semester. The UPSC reconvened in December 2008 to amend the plan based on input from the campus community, including comments from faculty, staff, students, and committees. Through a collaborative process over two separate meetings, the UPSC incorporated suggestions and then forwarded the plan on to the Academic Senate. The plan was endorsed by the Academic Senate and implemented by the President in late spring of 2009.

The [University Strategic Plan](#) for 2008-2009 through 2012-2013 was developed by the UPSC, a group of faculty, staff, students, and administrators appointed by the

President in consultation with the Academic Senate. The USP is a broad statement of SSU's goals and objectives in pursuit of its mission and vision. As such, it serves a number of institutional purposes, including: (1) a framework for planning, prioritizing, and decision-making by Divisions, Schools, Departments, and other units; (2) a basis for allocating university-wide resources for selected appropriate initiatives; and (3) through its development process, a consensus building process for a shared vision and direction for the university.

The USP is structured as follows:

- **Mission:** A statement of purpose of SSU that retains the existing Mission Statement.
- **Vision:** A statement of aspiration of what SSU hopes to become in the future.
- **Values:** Distinctive aspects of the culture of SSU.
- **Strategic areas, overarching goals and supporting objectives:** Areas and goals represent large-scale organizational units or overarching aspects of strategic importance; objectives are the identified ways in which the strategic goal can be advanced.
- **University-Wide Funding Initiatives:** Goals and objectives that are best advanced by allocating resources or initiating a program at the University-wide level, rather than at division levels.

Accompanying the plan are two important Appendices: (1) a contextual history of planning at SSU with an overview of the main trends that define the external environment within which the USP is formulated; and (2) a sample of potential initiatives for consideration in advancing the goals and objectives identified in the USP.

The University Strategic Plan's nine strategic areas – academic programs, community engagement, diversity, enrollment management, external support, faculty and staff, infrastructure, quality of the student experience, and sustainability – represent the foci of the university's commitments to educational effectiveness and excellence over the next five years. In a current climate of economic uncertainty and budgetary constraints, it is even more imperative for the university to utilize the strategic plan in order to make appropriate decisions for the future. (CFR 4.1)

The Academic Affairs Strategic Plan

The CPR visiting team noted that in Academic Affairs, broad based planning had been pursued in “parallel” tracks: (1) The Academic Planning Committee (APC), a standing committee of the Academic Senate that had revised a Long Range Academic Plan (LRAP, revisions adopted 2/5/2004) from a previous version from a decade before, and (2) the Academic Affairs Strategic Planning Committee in the Office of the Provost (Academic Affairs Plan 2005). The visiting team noted that the “Educational Effectiveness Review would benefit from a clearer demonstration of continuity, cooperation, and visibility in the planning process.” The team further commended “the proposed working agreement between the Academic Planning Committee and the Academic Affairs Council as an unprecedented opportunity for the resolution of tensions between governance and administrative approaches to planning. At the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review, clear evidence that this agreement has prospered and has proved productive would be most significant.”

Additionally, the [WASC Commission Letter \(June 25, 2008\)](#) cited as an issue meriting further attention the need for SSU to “yoke disparate planning efforts into a

single, respected process.” To that end, the Provost convened a new planning advisory group, the Joint Council on Academic Planning (JCAP), consisting of the membership of APC and the Academic Affairs Council, with the additions of the Academic Senate Chair and the President of the Associated Students. The council met at an all day retreat in June 2008 to discuss the issues of concerns raised in the letter (see [JCAP Retreat Agenda](#)) and created a plan to address each issue systematically (see [Action Plan](#)). Following the retreat, the JCAP convened regularly throughout the 2008-2009 academic year to follow through on these issues and to finalize the [Academic Affairs Strategic Plan](#).

In order to reach consensus on the plan, the committee spent time aligning the University Strategic Plan, the Long Range Academic Plan (LRAP), and the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan (see Appendix 8: Comparison of Four SSU Strategic Planning Documents). JCAP then moved the plan forward for Academic Senate and governance committees’ endorsements, which were achieved during the Spring 2009 semester. The Provost accepted and implemented the new plan in May. Currently, the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, in the context of its mission and vision, has identified seven strategic areas:

1. Identify, maintain and enhance excellent and distinctive academic programs that are responsive to changing student populations.
2. Attract, retain and support excellent faculty and staff.
3. Build a diverse and inclusive university community and culture that actively promote our core values.

4. Foster collaborations that address the educational, social, cultural, and economic development needs of the regional community and enhance our students' learning.
5. Establish sustainability as a key element of Sonoma State University's identity on campus and in the region.
6. Develop a strong and expanding resource base to support excellence in teaching and learning.
7. Enrich the culture of shared governance within the Division of Academic Affairs among faculty, administration, staff, and students, in conformity with generally accepted principles of academic governance and in light of CSU policy statements.

Within each strategic area, goals have been articulated, and a number of initiatives have been identified, some of which are already underway, while others will be developed over time. JCAP's next steps will be to identify timelines, metrics, and assessment strategies to determine how well the strategic area goals and initiatives are being met. This work will continue into the Fall 2009 semester. Clearly, the CPR visiting team's concern regarding the "resolution of tensions between governance and administrative approaches to planning" is being addressed. The agreement between the Academic Senate, the Academic Planning Committee, and the Division of Academic Affairs is indeed prospering and proving productive.

Planning Processes

During the CPR visit, the team acknowledged having some difficulty in understanding the roles of various groups in the strategic planning process. Given that

planning occurs at multiple levels and in different divisions, how are these planning processes effectively linked? In posing this central question, the CPR visiting team prompted the university to think about how planning processes at the various division and school levels inform and influence one another. The [Academic Affairs Strategic Planning Process](#) flow chart illustrates how the planning process at the Academic Affairs Division level relates to the University Strategic Plan, as well as the planning occurring at school and department levels. In addition, [Annual and Five Year Planning Processes](#) have been developed that articulate the relationship among department, school, and academic affairs planning cycles, including how Academic Program Review feeds information into the planning cycles. (These schematics are also included in the EER Report as Appendices 9 and 10.)

Strategic Planning Initiatives

To demonstrate how the University Strategic Plan and the Academic Affairs Plan guide other planning processes and initiatives, the following examples are presented.

Faculty Development:

As pointed out at the time of the CPR review, faculty development is a key component of both the University Strategic Plan and the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan. In the 2007-2008 academic year, an initial investment of \$200,000 in permanent funds was made to the program, with a commitment to gradually increase the level of permanent funding for faculty development to \$1,000,000. However, due to the severe budget cuts anticipated for 2009-10 and 2010-11, further increases in the faculty development fund have been deferred until at least 2011-12.

Academic Affairs Technology Advisory Committee:

The University Strategic Plan identifies Infrastructure as one of the nine strategic areas for the university with the goal of “addressing infrastructure needs and prepare the physical plant for enrollment growth while meeting sustainability objectives.” An objective within the infrastructure area is to “address changing campus administrative, instructional, academic, and student information technology needs.” Additionally, the AASP recognizes the need for improved academic technology in two Strategic Areas and has identified goals and initiatives in this area:

- Strategic Area 1: Identify, maintain and enhance excellent and distinctive academic programs that are responsive to changing student populations.

Strategic Goal 1.5: Enhance teaching and learning by integrating information competence into the curriculum and increasing information access via the library and instructional technology.

- Strategic Area 2: Attract, retain and support excellent faculty and staff.

Strategic Goal 2.1: Support faculty in all areas of their professional responsibilities.

Initiative 2.1.6. Fund timely acquisition and maintenance of appropriate facilities and equipment to carry out the academic mission (including library resources, workstations, software, lab equipment, and datasets).

In December 2008 the Provost, with the President’s endorsement, convened the Academic Technology Advisory Committee ([ATAC](#)) to develop a strategic plan “in order to inform and guide the implementation and use of effective academic technology.... The goal is to develop a plan that will support teaching, learning, and scholarship in the 21st century and align with the SSU Academic Strategic Plan and the University Strategic

Plan.” Academic technology is defined as technology and services that are applied directly to teaching and learning, research and scholarship pursuits. The SSU ATAC was charged to:

- Develop an Academic Technology Strategic Plan for Sonoma State University.
- Act as a forum for the exchange of ideas around sound applications of academic technology.

The ATAC worked throughout the Spring semester 2009 and presented the campus with a [draft ATAC Plan](#) in May. Implementation should begin in the Fall of 2009 after adoption of the draft. Sound and thoughtful applications of academic technology can transform the dynamic of learning environments and expand the knowledge and skills needed for an increasingly online global world.

SAEM Strategic Plan:

The Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management has undertaken a strategic planning process. This process began in the fall of 2008 with a series of division-wide meetings to establish values clarification and a new mission statement. The mission statement and values clarification process has been completed as well as determination of general domains for strategic planning. Specific goals and objectives are currently under consideration utilizing a broad spectrum of input. Principles of shared governance are being utilized in the planning process by inviting faculty, student and community input as well as cross-divisional efforts. The plan will be vetted by the Student Affairs Advisory Council as well as the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. Targeted completion is fall 2009.