

**Youngstown State University  
Office of the Provost**

**THE ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN  
2007-2013**

Background and Context

The Academic Strategic Plan for Youngstown State University arises within a historical context and responds to a set of driving forces affecting Youngstown State University and public education generally in Ohio and across the country. These forces include issues of funding, access, student preparedness, shifting regional demographics, competition for students, tensions between liberal and professional education, technology, diversity, and the role of the public university in economic development activities.

The historical context for our planning activities is reflected in the University's Mission Statement and its Vision Statement, both of which were affirmed as part of the University's Centennial Strategic Plan.

**Mission**

*Youngstown State University provides open access to high-quality education through a broad range of affordable certificate, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate programs.*

*The University is dedicated to*

- *outstanding teaching, scholarship, and service and to forging connections among these three interactive components of its mission;*
- *fostering student-faculty relationships that enrich teaching and learning, develop scholarship, and encourage public service;*
- *promoting diversity and an understanding of global perspectives;*
- *advancing the intellectual, cultural, and economic life of the state and region.*

## Vision

*Youngstown State University will become a national model for student-centered comprehensive urban universities, transforming its students into successful professionals, scholars, citizens, and leaders.*

*Building upon its tradition of developing the body, mind, and spirit, YSU will provide a full range of services and amenities to meet the needs of residential, commuter, and offsite students.*

*In partnership with schools and the corporate, public, and non-profit communities, YSU will promote diversity and excellence in teaching, research, and service to increase the educational attainment, economic prosperity, and environmental vitality of the region.*

*The University will be a center for intellectual and cultural activity and a catalyst for public engagement.*

A university's mission and vision statements provide the fundamental reasons for the institution's existence and an aspirational statement about the future, respectively. Ultimately, it is the latter that needs to be more central in any planning process. A strategic plan should identify a set of objectives or goals and the pathways or strategies by which an institution expects to realize its articulated vision. Some of these pathways are broadly sketched directions, while others refer to measurable outcomes.

To identify a set of aspirations for the future of the academic division as well as a series of action steps to realize those aspirations, the academic planning process began with each college engaging in a comprehensive review of academic programs. Program review was, however, only a prelude to the more challenging tasks of planning. By design, our planning work in 2006 and 2007 coincided with preparation of a self-study document in anticipation of the Higher Learning Commission's scheduled reaccreditation visit in February 2008 and the University's Centennial in the same year.

Academic Affairs has been mindful, in the planning process, of the ways accomplishments in realizing previous strategic goals guide and inform our future but do not constrain it. In this regard, we build most directly upon strategic directions within the Centennial Plan. Critical Issue 2 is the most relevant to our endeavors:

### **Programs/Teaching, Learning, and Research**

*YSU will promote excellence in teaching, learning, service and research – and prepare students to undertake civic and leadership responsibilities – through programs and educational experiences that meet student and workforce needs.*

## Planning Concerns

The planning phase of an activity begins when the unit considers future aspirations. What do we wish to be in five years? Ten years? Consideration of such questions needs to be embedded within the various disciplines practiced at the University and in the ways those disciplines continue to evolve, as well as within the University's overarching mission and vision. The Academic Division is justifiably proud of the many outstanding programs on our campus and of our students' success. It goes without saying that the foundation of any planning document should be our existing points of excellence and strength. Indeed, the particular goals that we identify in the following sections build upon current strengths to attain higher levels of achievement.

One of the driving forces affecting Youngstown State University is the diminishing public support for public education. A dramatically increased share of educational costs is borne by our students and their families; there are obvious limits to the extent to which we can shift financial burdens from the state to students. What this means, ultimately, is that we do not expect significant additional resources to be available, at least during the first years of our academic plan.

Nevertheless, a planning document should address the expected needs for the unit to achieve the goals that are set. What are the challenges and/or the barriers to realizing our aspirations? Such statements should be useful in assembling case statements and needs lists for institutional advancement. The Academic Strategic Plan will also help us make the necessary decisions about the investment of resources and about our mix of programs, precisely because it is embedded within our University mission. The need to align institutional resources with institutional mission is always a compelling one.

## Planning Units

Academic departments and programs developed and submitted unit plans in December 2006. These documents were reviewed and synthesized into college-level plans. The latter were supplemented by planning documents from the School of Graduate Studies and Research, the Honors Program, Academic Advising, the Office of Institutional Research, Maag Library, the Office of Assessment, General Education, and the Center for International Studies and Programs. All of the above informed discussions at the divisional level.

The draft academic plan was generated by an expanded Deans Council. However, that level of review and planning was merely preliminary to global consideration by members of the Academic Division. We offered series of presentations to faculty, staff, and students. This wider consultation was necessary to ensure that the academic plan comports well with other division plans and with the University's planning documents.

## Organizing Issues

One of the most challenging questions for many higher education institutions is the question of distinctiveness. What distinguishes our institution from other institutions that are by some measure “like us?” Phrased differently, what is it about Youngstown State University that should make us the destination of choice for prospective students from Youngstown, the region, and beyond? The answer to this question derives ultimately from our mission and our vision. And the answer to this question drives our recruiting efforts and our planning activities.

Several themes recur in our mission statement, our vision, the YSU Strategic Plan, and other statements of our identity. Among these themes are the following:

- Metropolitan campus
- Public university
- Open access; successful developmental programs
- Affordability
- Excellence of academic programs
- Connections between classroom and external experiences
- Links between research, teaching, and learning
- Community and civic engagement
- Mix of traditional and nontraditional students
- Increasing diversity
- Linkage among YSU, urban, and regional development

These themes and others have worked together to produce the exciting mix of academic and nonacademic programs on our campus today. For example, many of our major programs require or encourage student practica and internships as part of the academic curriculum. Equally, YSU is proud of its partnership with the City of Youngstown and with regional development initiatives, including workforce development and advanced manufacturing initiatives. Consideration of a community college, an investigation that was mandated by the Board of Trustees, stems directly from a reconsideration of the role of the University in the region and the need to increase access to an enhanced set of higher education options.

In a series of discussions during the spring and early summer of 2006, the deans and other groups were asked to help shape the academic planning process by linking our distinctiveness as an institution to the University’s mission and vision. Building upon the University’s mission of outreach and access, notably at undergraduate levels, we proposed as a heuristic the following formulation of our academic distinctiveness:

**“YSU is a public university for the public good committed to  
excellence, engagement, and meaningful experiences  
in diverse settings.”**

Incarnations of this formulation necessarily vary across YSU colleges and departments, and it is the composite realizations that constitute our institutional distinction. Such a formula is obviously limited in its level of detail, but it provided a useful point of departure for our academic planning exercises. At the very least, it provided an encapsulation around which units could anchor their reviews and plans.

The notion of “a public university for the public good” relates not only to access but also to diversity defined in racial, socioeconomic, and other terms. It also entails sufficient academic and other support to promote graduation within a reasonable time frame and a sensitivity to the challenges derived from shrinking state support and limited financial aid. Our commitment to the public good is also manifest in the array of academic programs that we offer. These programs prepare our students for productive lives as ethical and engaged citizens in critical fields. Departments and colleges work with local industry and with civic organizations to spur regional development and thus to increase the number of employment opportunities in the region.

“Excellence, engagement, and meaningful experiences” refers to the educational opportunities and achievements at Youngstown State University. The size of our institution enables students to work directly and closely with talented and dedicated faculty at the undergraduate level. Undergraduate research opportunities abound across the campus. Individual academic programs are nationally accredited where appropriate. YSU students compete and excel regionally and nationally across a range of disciplines. Similarly, YSU graduate programs offer students post-baccalaureate opportunities that are widely recognized for their success in preparing students for professional careers and for nationally competitive doctoral programs. We are justifiably proud of our academic programs and the achievements of our faculty and students.

Student engagement and experience are evident in the mix of traditional and nontraditional students on our campus and in the many internship and practicum experiences offered. There are challenges associated with YSU’s identity as a metropolitan commuter campus, but this identity also means that our students are engaged members of the surrounding communities. The challenge is for us to engage commuter students meaningfully in “the life of the campus,” and we do this regularly by the nature of our academic programs as well as in partnership with Student Affairs. A graduate of YSU is someone who has received an excellent education, who is prepared for productive employment or further study, who understands and responds to the needs of civic engagement, and who is an active member of the community. The future leaders of our community (and others) in terms of economic development and public service will be drawn from our graduates.

### The Community College Issue

In addition to a contemporaneous set of activities having to do with the Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation process, planning for the Academic Division also took place while the campus and community were asked to consider the merits and challenges of establishing a community college for our region. Both the Academic Strategic Plan and

the preliminary report of the Community College Study Group are due to be presented to the Board of Trustees in June 2007.

It is obvious that the establishment of a local community college would have a dramatic and immediate impact on Youngstown State University. Extensive primary and secondary data have been collected and analyzed. The data clearly establish the need for a community college in the Mahoning Valley. Citizens and business and civic leaders agree that a community college would help the area economy by providing a trained workforce and higher-paying employment opportunities. The analysis also shows that community colleges offer a high-quality education at a fraction of the cost of four-year institutions. Further, two-year programs often better reflect the needs of the community by addressing program timing and location. The data also indicate that the general public is not aware of Youngstown State University's existing two-year programs.

The cost associated with a university establishing a community college pricing structure has surfaced as the key issue of the study. The Mahoning Valley Promise, which would assure that every Youngstown State University student from the Mahoning Valley would be promised a maximum out-of-pocket expense during the first two years of college, is a proposed strategy to address the pricing issue. To date, strategies have been developed to drive down the cost of tuition; however, much work remains on this issue.

Various models of community colleges have been proposed and discussed. The Community College Planning Committee has recommended the "Integrated Partnership Model," which is based on the assumption that good partners can create an efficient and effective community college. Potential partners, such as the Columbiana County Career and Technical Center, the Mahoning County Career and Technical Center, Choffin Career and Technical Center, the Trumbull County Career and Technical Center, St. Elizabeth Health Care Center, and others, are now on board with the project. The basic idea is to locate two-year programs at the point of greatest need, at prices that are affordable. This model invests in people, not buildings.

University officials have had conversations with Eric Fingerhut, Chancellor, Ohio Board of Regents, about establishing a community college in the Mahoning Valley. Although Chancellor Fingerhut has indicated his full support for a community college in the Mahoning Valley, at this time he is not convinced that Youngstown State University should be the entity that establishes one. For a detailed report of all of these issues, please consult the Community College Planning Activity Report.

In light of the above, the Academic Strategic Plan does not directly address the community college issue. Some of the composite goals within the Strategic Plan address issues that relate directly to community college concerns, e.g., student preparedness and access considerations. Whatever the Trustees and the Ohio Board of Regents decide about whether planning for a community college should continue, all of the goals described in the Strategic Plan should be pursued.

## Key Elements of the Plan

The Academic Strategic Plan needs to be understood as a divisional plan for the future. It is not the immediate sequel to the University's Centennial Plan or an institutional-wide plan. However, given the centrality of academic affairs within every university structure, particular goals within the Academic Strategic Plan will need to be effected in cooperation with other university divisions.

During the planning phase, every unit was asked to focus its discussions and documents around four central issues:

- Academic programs
- Engagement and student experiences
- Diversity in all its manifestations (racial, socioeconomic, international, etc.)
- Partnerships and community involvement

Discussions of academic programs obviously focus on the curriculum and the ways in which it is central to our mission and to our institutional excellence. Through program review and planning, programs and departments addressed degree programs as well as their contributions to General Education, to the Honors Program, to developmental education, or to other service teaching offered within the unit. Many department documents described the ways departments collaborate with other units both internally and externally.

In our attempts to integrate and synthesize the issues and aspirations raised in department, program, and college documents, we realized that the various items could be organized into a set of three overarching themes that draw upon the points of excellence and distinctiveness noted above:

- **Academic Success: Students at Our Center**
- **Academic Excellence: The YSU Experience**
- **Academic Impact and Engagement: Campus and Community**

In summary, the Academic Strategic Plan includes nested sets of aspirations and goals as well as explicit action items and metrics. The planning process has built upon our institutional strengths and values. Properly realized, the Academic Strategic Plan provides us with a blueprint for continued excellence that is congruent with the University's academic distinctiveness and mission. The Academic Strategic Plan also serves as a useful foundation for the University's next comprehensive strategic plan.

Background documents (available in HLC Resource Room):

- Department and program plans
- College plans
- Other academic unit plans

## **THE ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY OF GOAL STATEMENTS**

### **I. ACADEMIC SUCCESS: STUDENTS AT OUR CENTER**

- GOAL 1:** Develop a centralized organizational support structure, tentatively referred to as the University College, that provides centralized, consistent, and comprehensive academic support for specifically identified student populations. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; Academic Advising]
- GOAL 2:** Strengthen the current model of academic advising by providing centralized coordination and support within the Provost's Office. [Academic Advising; Academic Colleges; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 3:** Develop a strategic plan for distance education and learning, focusing on a unified vision, opportunities, sustainability, and resources. [Academic Colleges; MetroCredit; Information Technology]
- GOAL 4:** Work with Information Technology to effect classroom technology upgrades to support technology, with a goal of installing appropriate technology within all classrooms by 2013; provide appropriate faculty support and development to use technology most effectively. [Academic Colleges; Information Technology; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 5:** Work, within the context of the Campus Master Plan, to provide additional classrooms, learning and study spaces, and faculty offices across the campus. [Academic Colleges; Provost's Office; Facilities]
- GOAL 6:** Work, within the context of the Campus Master Plan, to secure authorization and funding for a new STEM facility on campus. [College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; Provost's Office; Facilities]

### **II. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: THE YSU EXPERIENCE**

- GOAL 1:** Strategically allocate resources to support sustainable new and existing programs in interdisciplinary and disciplinary areas at all degree levels. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 2:** Increase graduate FTE to 650 by 2013. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 3:** Strengthen institutional commitment to diversity through proactive recruitment and retention campaigns, resulting in annual increases in diversity among students, faculty, and staff. [All units]
- GOAL 4:** Promote internationalization of the YSU student experience through curricular revision and study-abroad experiences; increase the international student headcount on campus to 3% by 2013. [Center for International Studies and Programs; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]

- GOAL 5:** Address and improve the full-time/part-time faculty ratio, and increase the presence of full-time faculty members in our classrooms. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges]
- GOAL 6:** Support a faculty culture wherein mentoring for junior faculty members is recognized as a crucial variable in faculty retention and in a culture of professional development. [Academic Colleges, Departments, Provost's Office]
- GOAL 7:** Foster a campus culture in which faculty are actively involved in professional development throughout their professional careers; offer additional faculty-development opportunities, including resources for teaching/learning innovations. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]
- GOAL 8:** Continue to support and to celebrate achievements in research and scholarship among faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]

### **III. Academic Impact and Engagement: Campus and Community**

- GOAL 1:** Place engagement at the center of the YSU educational experience so that all students will encounter "the invitation to engagement" as a permeant element in their curricula. [Academic Colleges; Departments; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 2:** Increase the quality and quantity of internship opportunities available to students. [Academic Colleges]
- GOAL 3:** Pursue opportunities for off-campus credit-generating courses in regional high schools, workplaces, and other off-site facilities; increase off-campus credit generation 40% by 2013. [MetroCredit; Associate Degree and Tech Prep Programs; Academic Colleges]
- GOAL 4:** Develop a revised vision and mission for the Public Service Institute, incorporating the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, Center for Human Services Development, and MetroWorkforce in FY 2008; increase unit productivity 40% by 2013. [Public Service Institute; School of Graduate Studies and Research]
- GOAL 5:** Promote additional research and development activities, in cooperation with regional businesses, healthcare organizations, social service agencies, and other public institutions to make the academic colleges, in coordination with the School of Graduate Studies and Research, major drivers in regional economic development and catalysts for entrepreneurship. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]
- GOAL 6:** Increase YSU's role in the preparation of a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce and partner in regional economic development. [MetroWorkforce; MetroCredit; Office of Associate Degree and Tech Prep Programs]
- GOAL 7:** Enhance partnerships between the University and schools throughout our service region; strengthen cultural interactions between the University and the community, through the fine, performing, and creative arts as well as other programming. [Academic Colleges; Provost's Office]

# THE ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN

## I. ACADEMIC SUCCESS: STUDENTS AT OUR CENTER

First and foremost, Youngstown State University defines itself as a learning-centered institution. The commitment to student and to academic success is manifest both in retention and graduation rates as well as ongoing support for innovation in programming and services. The Academic Division is also conscious of the many ways in which campus facilities directly impact student success in the academic arena.

**GOAL 1: Develop a centralized organizational support structure, tentatively referred to as the University College, that provides centralized, consistent, and comprehensive academic support for specifically identified student populations. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; Academic Advising]**

YSU serves multiple student populations. The University is proud of student success, but we are cognizant that some specific student populations need a more centralized, consistent, and comprehensive academic support system. These students include the following:

- High school students (Youngstown Early College; SB 140 students)
- Conditional admission students
- Students with an undetermined major
- Students with a general studies major (B.G.S.)
- Transfer students on warning/probation
- Students who place into developmental courses

Quality academic support is currently provided for YSU students through multiple sources, including academic advisors, the Reading and Study Skills Center, the Writing Center, the Math Assistance Center, and Information Literacy programs; the Academic Division also works in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, which includes the Center for Student Progress, the Admissions Office, and the University Registrar. However, administration of these academic services is fragmented rather than consistent and cohesive. According to a 2002 Retention Audit Report (STAMATS Communications), “inconsistent and inappropriate advising/placement exists at YSU. A clear theme of disconnect in the overall advising process is shared campus-wide” (p. 23). Recommendations included in the STAMATS report were to create “a first-year experience/success course” (p. 38) and to “develop and promote a specific plan for serving undecided students” (p. 38). We also need to consider coordination of developmental education.

The Academic Division needs to play a more central and critical role in providing coordination of academic services for these identified student populations. Potential positive outcomes of centralized organizational support within the Academic Division will include more consistent and comprehensive academic services, thus effecting greater student engagement, more successful progression into selected majors, and higher retention and graduation rates.

The Academic Division is conscious of its responsibilities to provide effective intervention strategies for students who require more intensive academic support. This population includes both matriculated students and others, such as some enrolled in the Early College High School program.

**GOAL 2: Strengthen the current model of academic advising by providing centralized coordination and support within the Provost's Office. [Academic Advising; Academic Colleges; Provost's Office]**

The STAMATS Academic Advising Audit Report (October 2002) recommended “that infusion of financial support and recognition of quality advising is essential if we are to improve our service to students.” External assessment mirrored that of an internal report (A Study Group on Academic Advising [Student Government report to Academic Senate, January 2001]). Similarly, the Centennial Strategic Plan addressed the need to “improve the advising process for all students” (Critical Issue 1). Further, the October 2002 STAMATS audit/retention report characterized YSU’s current advising system as “lackluster” (p. 24). The report acknowledged the lack of oversight and coordination of advising among the individual colleges, as well as the lack of advising training and ongoing professional development of advisors. The STAMATS report concluded that YSU needed to “Evaluate and strengthen academic advisement” and proposed that the University “appoint a campus wide advising director/coordinator” (p. 37-38). Since these reports were submitted in 2001-2002, no significant changes addressing the issues raised have been made within the Academic Division.

The locus of academic advising rightly resides in our academic colleges. A college-specific model works well for the majority of students, but advising processes need coordination and centralized support to make advisement maximally effective. The University College model outlined in Goal 1 above will provide for intensive advising services for those students who require greater academic support.

To achieve and maintain a high standard of academic advising at YSU, a more cohesive model for academic advising is needed. Such a model can provide for centralized coordination, oversight, and representational authority within the Provost’s Office yet retain the unique advising systems within individual colleges. Such a model would also help to establish more consistency in institutional support for faculty advising across the University.

Advantages of a more centralized model for academic advising include the following:

- Greater cohesiveness and recognition as an “advising unit” on campus

- Greater coordination and collaboration in advising issues that involve other departments or units (e.g., Registration, Undergraduate Admissions, Center for Student Progress and other student support services, General Education, Academic Standards)
- Improved academic advising resulting in better student outcomes – improved placement in appropriate courses, greater student progression and graduation rates, greater student satisfaction with advising, and greater student engagement and retention
- Greater advisor and faculty satisfaction with the advising process

**GOAL 3: Develop a strategic plan for distance education and learning, focusing on a unified vision, opportunities, sustainability, and resources.  
[Academic Colleges; MetroCredit; Information Technology]**

The University currently offers quality distance education opportunities through off-site traditional delivery of academic courses and programs as well as through technology-mediated delivery. These efforts have been opportunistic rather than strategic, however, and the University has not developed a unified plan for distance education. The Higher Learning Commission encouraged the University to develop campus-wide coordination in preparation for any expansion of distance initiatives; in response, a search for a Coordinator/Director of Distance Education was launched in Fall 2006. However, the search was deactivated in Spring 2007 based upon input from Deans Council and a generally agreed-upon sense that the preparatory groundwork for such a hire had not been appropriately completed.

YSU needs to determine in a systematic fashion how distance education and learning form part of the University's mission and vision. What campus resources will be made available in support of distance learning, particularly for coordinating technology, services, and classrooms? How do we market and assess distance programs? What support do we make available to faculty members who are called upon to teach in these programs? How do we incentivize innovation and outreach?

A study commission will be appointed in Fall 2007 with a view toward making recommendations not later than January 31, 2008, regarding the possible development of an Office of Distance Learning and Education. This campus initiative will be led by MetroCredit, the unit currently responsible for the coordination and expansion of off-site credit-generating activities.

**GOAL 4: Work with Information Technology to effect classroom technology upgrades to support technology, with a goal of installing appropriate technology within all classrooms by 2013; provide appropriate faculty support and development to use technology most effectively.  
[Academic Colleges; Information Technology; Provost's Office]**

The state of classrooms across the campus is extremely varied, reflecting the lack of a unified plan for classroom renovation and upgrading. Academic Affairs and

Information Technology have partnered to install technology in a number of classrooms; faculty and students have responded very favorably to these renovated classrooms. There is, however, no overall plan for the campus as a whole, including equipment replacement. Decisions about which classrooms to renovate and upgrade are made on an ad hoc basis. The lack of a coordinated funding stream for technology installations has interfered with the development of a standardized classroom installation. Recognizing that *some* teaching units may have *specialized* needs, *standardization* of equipment in the *majority* of cases produces efficiency and savings.

**GOAL 5: Work, within the context of the Campus Master Plan, to provide additional classrooms, learning and study spaces, and faculty offices across the campus. [Academic Colleges; Provost's Office; Facilities]**

There is an acute shortage of classroom space on the campus. In particular, there are too few mid- (60-75) and large-sized (130+) classrooms, a shortage that prevents efficient instructional offerings in some cases. Some departments note that they are regularly forced to offer three small sections of a course, when they would prefer to offer a single mid-size section. The University needs to craft a plan to renovate and expand existing instructional spaces. An ad hoc committee needs to be appointed in 2007-08 to inventory and recommend improvements to academic spaces.

The 2003 Space Utilization Report noted that many departments are underresourced in space allocations. In several departments, there are no faculty offices to support program growth. This situation is acute for departments in Cushwa Hall and DeBartolo Hall. There has been enormous enrollment growth in the Bitonte College of Health and Human Services but no subsequent increase in teaching, learning, and work space for the College. For several of the departments needing laboratory-based instruction, challenges constrain future growth.

Reports generated for the Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation visit in 2008 note a general sense that academic space is not well-maintained on our campus. Every campus building needs to be as well-maintained as Kilcawley Center: every building is part of a campus recruitment strategy, but the carpeting, painting, furniture, draperies, etc. in academic buildings have been sadly neglected. In some instances, furnishings are original to the building.

**GOAL 6: Work, within the context of the Campus Master Plan, to secure authorization and funding for a new STEM facility on campus. [College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; Provost's Office; Facilities]**

Creation of the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics is a laudable campus initiative that promises to promote collaboration within these disciplines, to create additional study opportunities for our students, and to increase external collaboration and R&D funding opportunities. Ironically, however, the

research and teaching facilities in these disciplines are among the most insufficient on the campus.

The Ward Beecher facility is not appropriate for laboratory and research functions. It has been plagued by recurrent air circulation and moisture problems, flooding, and heating and cooling issues. The campus needs to designate a new science facility as a priority. When laboratories are removed from Ward Beecher, it may be possible for the existing building to be renovated for classroom and office space.

A connector between Ward Beecher and Moser Hall is already included in the Campus Master Plan.

## **II. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: THE YSU EXPERIENCE**

Universities are social and cultural institutions embedded within particular geographic and temporal contexts. As such, curricula exist in an ongoing state of assessment and revision. As a public metropolitan university, Youngstown State University has a mission that includes outreach and access initiatives. At the same time, the YSU experience is centered on academic excellence in programs, services, achievement, and faculty development. For example, high quality student programming is offered through the University Scholars and Honors Programs. Individuals and student teams regularly win awards in regional, state, and national competitions. The high quality of our academic programs is recognized by numerous discipline-based accreditation and review organizations. The quality of YSU faculty is reflected in their achievements in teaching, creative work, research, and service to the campus, the community, and the academy.

### **GOAL 1: Strategically allocate resources to support sustainable new and existing programs in interdisciplinary and disciplinary areas at all degree levels. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]**

Curricular revision and renewal need to be at the heart of the twenty-first century university. Youngstown State University is justly celebrated for the excellence of its academic programs, many of which are accredited by regional, national, and international discipline-specific agencies. As additional programs seek accreditation, additional resources in support of such recognition would be required.

Similarly, increased resources are required to mount additional degree programs. There is an inherent tension between the need to support growth in existing programs and the desire to initiate new directions for the University. At the graduate level, we are in the final stages of seeking degree authority for the Doctorate of Physical Therapy and the Master of Arts in Art Education degrees. Psychology is developing a proposal for a graduate degree in Applied Behavioral Analysis. Communication is in the early stages of a proposal for an M.A. in Communication. Given resource limitations, how do we decide which proposals to support? A number

of factors—including data-driven needs assessment, employment opportunities, collaboration, and sustainability—are important.

At the undergraduate level, the Rayen School of Engineering and Engineering Technology has introduced Materials Science options into all of the bachelor's degree tracks. An interdisciplinary major in Gerontology is in development stages; housed in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the major would include coursework in that department as well as in Psychology, Social Work, and several other departments. The Bitonte College of Health and Human Services is seeking to inaugurate two-year programs in Radiology Technology and in Nursing.

Reflecting national trends, there is an increased interest in interdepartmental degree and certificate programs at YSU, e.g. Business Economics, Web Communication, Spatial Information Systems (CSIS, Geography), Gerontology.

It will also behoove the University to pursue cooperative graduate programs, especially at the doctoral level, with institutions having Ph.D. authority.

**GOAL 2: Increase graduate FTE to 650 by 2013. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]**

The undergraduate/graduate headcount ratio has been 90/10 for several years. Because the undergraduate population continues to grow, the previous target of an 85/15 ratio represented a shifting target. Present graduate FTE is approximately 500. We seek to increase the FTE to 650. This goal seeks to ensure that the mixes of programs and students on our campus are maximally effective, including areas in science and engineering, healthcare, education, and business. Intensified and focused graduate recruiting efforts will be required to achieve 650 FTE.

Efficient marketing and recruitment are essential to the success of all academic programs. With changes approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2007, out-of-state tuition for graduate programs is extremely competitive, but we need an effective marketing strategy to expand the recruitment base for our graduate programs.

**GOAL 3: Strengthen institutional commitment to diversity through proactive recruitment and retention campaigns, resulting in significant annual increases in diversity among students, faculty, and staff. [All units]**

The University has an appreciation of diversity as one of its core values. Diversity in students, faculty, and staff is measured not only within racial categories; it should also include considerations of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical origin. The University has growing populations of international faculty and students. Similarly, our location as a metropolitan campus means that we draw a high incidence of first-generation college students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

YSU has made impressive gains in the recruitment of traditionally underrepresented students (currently 15.6% of enrollment headcount), but retention of

minority students is an ongoing challenge. While the retention rate for first-time undergraduates is 67%, the rate for minority students is only 51.9%. The proposed University College structure will offer some additional support to minority students. Recent research has consistently shown that one of the major variables in the retention of students of color, particularly African-American males, is regular interaction with faculty members.

Recruitment of faculty members drawn from underrepresented groups has been supported through the Strategic Hiring Program initiated in 2006. Approximately 16% of the full-time faculty members self-identify as belonging to a minority group. In addition to the essential value of a diverse faculty in helping the University to achieve its educational mission, faculty of color play a vital role in the retention of minority students. Organizations such as the Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA) are important auxiliaries to administrative offices in advocating for the interests of their members and can thereby assist in the retention of minority faculty.

**GOAL 4: Promote internationalization of the YSU student experience through curricular revision and study-abroad experiences; increase the international student headcount on campus to 3% by 2013. [Center for International Studies and Programs; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]**

No university can afford to ignore pressures for internationalization of its academic programs and student experiences. YSU's responsibility as a public institution educating tomorrow's citizens mandates an international aspect to curricula. Further, many employers now give an acknowledged recruiting preference to graduates with some international experience in their education.

Internationalization of the campus takes several forms. There is an increasing presence of international topics in our programs and degree tracks. In addition, we profit from the contributions of regular and visiting international faculty members. Faculty exchange programs, such as that inaugurated in 2006 between YSU and Lunghwa University in Taiwan, allow for a regular infusion of international experiences into a diversity of classrooms.

However, international students presently constitute less than 1% of the full-time student headcount. The Center for International Studies and Programs has been charged to increase international headcount to 3% by 2013. The Board of Trustees' approval of the new out-of-state graduate tuition differential will make YSU significantly more affordable for international students. To achieve this goal, coordination with marketing and admissions offices is essential.

International experiences for YSU students need to be expanded and promoted. The Center for International Studies and Programs will undertake to work with faculty to develop additional campus-based programs and to promote YSU-based study-abroad programs and other programs among our students. In 2005-06, only 43 YSU students participated in study-abroad experiences. Our goal is to increase this number to 250 by 2013.

**GOAL 5: Address and improve the full-time/part-time faculty ratio, and increase the presence of full-time faculty members in our classrooms. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges]**

The full-time/part-time faculty undergraduate instructional ratio (SCH) is currently 55:45. Since 2000, the proportion of courses taught by full-time members of the faculty has steadily decreased. For courses enrolling first-time freshmen, the situation is more acute. In 2000, 59% of first-year SCH were taught by full-time faculty members; in 2005, full-time faculty accounted for only 39% of first-year SCH. In 2000, there were (by headcount) 782 faculty, of whom 401 (51.2%) were full-time; in 2006, there were 969 headcount faculty, of whom 426 (44%) were full-time. That is, faculty growth has been almost exclusively in part-time appointments. This situation requires immediate redress.

An ad hoc committee has been constituted to examine the data regarding first-year SCH and to make recommendations to remediate the situation. As the amount of faculty reassigned time has increased, full-time faculty have often shed their freshman and General Education responsibilities. We need to return full-time faculty to our freshman and General Education classrooms.

This goal will require a reallocation and increase in instructional resources. The financial aspect is challenging. Twenty-four semester hours of instruction from masters-level part-time faculty costs approximately \$20,000 per year. The same load (8 x 3-hour courses) for a full-time masters-qualified instructor will cost \$36,455 minimally in FY 2008, according to salary minima in the YSU-OEA Agreement. Research has consistently shown that full-time faculty members are more likely to share and promote institutional values and mission. Further, full-time faculty have greater campus presence (office hours, campus activities, etc.), and interaction between faculty members and students is regularly a key variable in studies of student engagement and retention.

We aim to increase the representation of full-time faculty so that the FT:PT ratio will be 60:40 by 2010. By 2013, the goal is 65:35.

**GOAL 6: Support a faculty culture wherein mentoring for junior faculty members is recognized as a crucial variable in faculty retention and in a culture of professional development. [Academic Colleges, Departments, Provost's Office]**

New faculty members have a right to positive and consistent mentoring from senior members of the instructional faculty. Such mentoring is regularly cited in studies of faculty retention. It is also a core element in a culture wherein probationary faculty members understand the expectations for tenure and promotion and in which they receive guidance in achieving those expectations. Senior faculty and academic administrators share the responsibility for promoting a campus culture in which the links between scholarship and teaching are central in faculty development.

Mentoring of probationary faculty is excessively variable across the campus. The YSU-OEA Agreement lists mentoring responsibilities among faculty service activities, but we do not have appropriate structures to recognize and encourage such service. Effective mentoring has regularly been shown to be a responsibility of the faculty collective. How do we promote a culture in which probationary faculty regularly receive mentoring from experienced faculty in their departments and beyond?

**GOAL 7: Foster a campus culture in which faculty are actively involved in professional development throughout their professional careers; offer additional faculty-development opportunities, including resources for teaching/learning innovations. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]**

Faculty-development activities are critical to sustaining the excellence of academic programs on our campus. A number of faculty-development activities are institutionally supported, e.g., sabbatical leaves, reassigned time for research, professional travel awards, research professorships, reimbursement for advanced studies, and so forth.

Yet, the University can do more, particularly in providing opportunities for leadership development of mid-level faculty members. Possibilities for such development activity should be explored by an ad hoc committee in 2007-08, with a report to the Provost's Office in Spring 2008. It may be advisable to appoint someone in the Provost's Office to oversee and coordinate faculty-development activities.

A number of universities have instituted a program of "faculty circles," i.e., regular, informal discussion groups in which probationary faculty meet with and share experiences with senior members of the professorate. Departmental cultures are also critical here since it is faculty within the discipline who are best positioned to provide guidance and support to recently recruited members of the instructional faculty.

Similarly, increased prominence of interdisciplinary research centers and institutes should help to stimulate research and scholarship across the campus. The development of additional faculty exchange programs, at both national and international levels, should also be vigorously pursued.

**GOAL 8: Continue to support and to celebrate achievements in research and scholarship among faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. [Provost's Office; Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research]**

The University is justifiably proud of accomplishments in research and scholarship across the academic colleges. The Distinguished Professor Awards do recognize faculty accomplishments, but we do not do enough to celebrate outstanding success.

Many campuses sponsor a series of distinguished lectureships to highlight faculty achievement.

Student research and scholarship are highlighted annually at QUEST, which is supported by collegiate and Foundation funds.

The University should also examine the annual contribution to research activities from central funding sources.

### **III. Academic Impact and Engagement: Campus and Community**

Engagement with our external communities is incarnate in the Youngstown State University mission as a “metropolitan university” committed to the intellectual, cultural, and economic life of our state and region. The varied ways in which we engage our students, faculty, and staff with the community must support institutional goals and provide a context for the learning outcomes of the various academic programs. Creating an engaged, service-oriented institution requires that the process and outcomes of engagement benefit all stakeholders (i.e., the community, students, faculty, staff).

**GOAL 1: Place engagement at the center of the YSU educational experience so that all students will encounter “the invitation to engagement” as a permeant element in their curricula. [Academic Colleges; Departments; Provost’s Office]**

Through research opportunities for undergraduates, internships, community service, service learning, international activities, and hands-on learning, YSU structures experiential education. All of the above activities serve to enhance the students’ educational experience and support the attainment of educational outcomes. Many of these experiences are academically focused experiences that extend the learning and application of knowledge and skills in a specific discipline to a variety of organizational environments. Therefore, the University must:

- State the desired learning outcomes of “engagement”
- Identify how to achieve these outcomes and at what level (i.e, academic program level and/or university level)
- Provide development and recognition for faculty who serve as “ambassadors for engagement”
- Ensure that resources (finances, processes, people) are in place to support the achievement of engagement objectives

**GOAL 2: Increase the quality and quantity of internship opportunities available to students. [Academic Colleges]**

Internships and cooperative education are “academically focused, career-related work experiences.” As such, they are generally credit-bearing experiences at the upper-division level. Many employers, particularly in business and engineering, expect that graduating students have completed at least one career-related work experience. In areas such as education or the health sciences, student teaching and clinical experiences are required parts of the curriculum. Whether required, strongly recommended, or optional, these types of professional experiences are a critical component of our students’ preparation.

To support the expansion of these types of activities and to support coordination among academic units, YSU should re-establish the Internship Advisory Committee. This group would be composed of individuals from the six colleges who are involved with the internship/co-op programs. In addition, noncredit and/or lower-division internships could be promoted through both the academic unit and Career Services.

**GOAL 3: Pursue opportunities for off-campus credit-generating courses in regional high schools, workplaces, and other off-site facilities; increase off-campus credit generation 40% by 2013. [MetroCredit; Associate Degree and Tech Prep Programs; Academic Colleges]**

A major component of regional economic development will be increased participation in higher education initiatives. YSU has an outstanding record in producing skilled and knowledgeable workers, but the University has not marketed off-campus programs aggressively. The establishment of MetroCredit in 2006 was designed to focus on the identification and development of such opportunities.

MetroCredit has proposed to establish a network of high schools for a program entitled College in High School. Based upon successful models in other states, this program would provide qualified high school students the opportunity to earn both high school and YSU credit by completing approved classes during the regular school day.

MetroCredit has also taken the lead in increasing articulation between the University and technical and career centers throughout the region to facilitate the awarding of associate degrees. There are also numerous opportunities for YSU to deliver face-to-face programs in workplaces, thus providing working adults with ready access to credit-bearing college work.

**GOAL 4: Develop a revised vision and mission for the Public Service Institute, incorporating the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, Center for Human Services Development, and MetroWorkforce in FY 2008; increase unit productivity 40% by 2013. [Public Service Institute; School of Graduate Studies and Research]**

Traditionally at YSU the Public Service Institute, Center for Urban and Regional Studies, and Center for Human Services Development have provided a major

mechanism for YSU's community outreach activities. Together these units provide a resource base and access to institutional expertise for both research needs and community service activities. By combining these activities with redesigned MetroWorkforce development activities to serve the region, the University should have a greater impact in community development both in the planning area and now in the workforce development area, which have been largely unconnected initiative sets. Because of the nature of these units and the fact that most of the community-related projects are done as sponsored programs or grant-funded work, the revised missions of these units will be incorporated into the responsibility of the School of Graduate Studies and Research.

In consultation with the constituent units, a clear plan should be established that addresses the specific goals of the units, measures of productivity, human resource allocation, and how synergies will be created among the various areas to best serve private, non-profit, and public service sectors.

**GOAL 5: Promote additional research and development activities, in cooperation with regional businesses, healthcare organizations, social service agencies, and other public institutions to make the academic colleges, in coordination with the School of Graduate Studies and Research, major drivers in regional economic development and catalysts for entrepreneurship. [Academic Colleges; School of Graduate Studies and Research; Provost's Office]**

Economic development is an important extension of YSU's mission and that of several academic units. To date, YSU's role and that of the colleges has not been clearly defined, thus creating confusion in the minds of some faculty and the community. Economic development activities are important and appropriate for YSU to the extent that these activities support teaching and scholarship, achieve learning outcomes, and further our mission as an educational institution committed to "advancing the intellectual, cultural, and economic life of the state and region." The credibility of our professional units is enhanced through value-added contributions to business, government, and nonprofit organizations; academic units can expand both scholarly activity of faculty and educational opportunities for students through cooperative activities with these organizations.

YSU can serve as a catalyst for economic development in its efforts to:

- Educate the workers and entrepreneurs of tomorrow, with the goal of maximizing the human capital available to achieve future prospects for economic growth.
- Build capacity to increase the impact of knowledge and technology transfer of the institution by providing the business community easy access to research and training facilities, centers of research excellence, and development of jointly operated facilities.

- Provide intellectual expertise in areas such as organizational/business planning, market analysis, and discipline-related services through externally sponsored programs and research.
- Partner with the public and private sectors to drive economic and workforce development initiatives (Advanced Manufacturing Initiative).
- Establish links with regional initiatives (such as JumpStart, Team NEO, MAGNET, and NORTEC) and with other universities (North Shore Graduate and Research Alliance) to provide faculty, firms, and new innovations with needed resources from any of these regional activities.

**GOAL 6: Increase YSU's role in the preparation of a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce, and partner in regional economic development. [MetroWorkforce; MetroCredit; Office of Associate Degree and Tech Prep Programs]**

Working adults need increased access to off-campus and weekend college activities. Increasingly, YSU has recognized that such potential students need to initiate their back-to-school plans with minimal disruption. There is considerable public funding to offer credit coursework on-site to the incumbent workforce. MetroCredit should undertake a community survey to determine the level of interest in a weekend college program that would provide additional degree-completion opportunities for working adults.

The University will increase its partnerships throughout the region to offer non-credit workforce development programs under the auspices of MetroWorkforce.

**GOAL 7: Enhance partnerships between the University and schools throughout our service region; strengthen cultural interactions between the University and the community, through the fine, performing, and creative arts as well as other programming. [Academic Colleges; Provost's Office]**

The University has long-established and productive partnerships with many school districts and local schools. These partnerships include the Early College High School located on the YSU campus as well as relationships and joint activities with community schools and regional service centers. The continued development of these partnerships is vital to the health of our region and to our future prosperity.

The arts are central to the quality of life on the University campus and in the community. Concerts, art exhibits, plays, and other performances are essential components of a high-quality community life. Making these activities more accessible to local citizens and schools will promote a fullness of artistic experience for the constituents while also providing new audiences for our students. Similarly, the many programs offering cultural enrichment offered through the academic colleges require continuing support and development.