

*University Planning Council Approval: 4/28/08
Faculty Senate Approval: 5/15/08
Pending Board of Trustees Action*

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Strategic Plan 2009-2013: Sustaining the Advance

The University of Vermont has embraced a vision of academic excellence predicated on investment in faculty and staff, in student scholarships, in programmatic initiatives like the Honors College, in attractive residence halls that promote community, in new academic and research facilities, in a student center and enhanced student programming, in intercollegiate athletics, in maintenance and beautification of the campus, and in instructional technology. The university has achieved remarkable success since the turn of the century -- a period that encompasses the approval by the Board of Trustees of the Strategic Action Plan in 2000, the evolution of that plan in the University Strategic Plan of 2003, the financial elaboration of the plan in the Strategic Financial Plan of 2004 and the Strategic Capital Plan of 2006, and the curricular elaboration of the plan in "Signatures of Excellence" the same year -- and in recognition of the thematic continuity and coherence of these planning documents, the University of Vermont community reaffirms the core values of the vision and mission that have guided the university in recent years.

Yet our recent successes are only a beginning. Our own achievements have created even higher expectations for the future, a future in which we will face increasingly intense competition in bringing together all that is required to meet these higher expectations. And, we will quite likely confront this pressure in an economic, social, and political context that is quite different from that of the last decade and, perhaps, less facilitative of our efforts to meet the challenges ahead.

Anticipating fewer high school graduates and increasing fiscal pressures for families, state and federal government, and private donors, we propose a strategic plan that, if pursued, will sustain the advance of the University of Vermont through the next decade and beyond. UVM cannot match the budgetary resources of many of our peer and aspirant institutions. But by dint of being creative, focused, and resourceful, we can nevertheless put UVM in the vanguard through the realization of the vision and achievement of the mission, goals, and objectives delineated in this document.

The nation's smallest land grant institution with a medical college, UVM has a human scale and distinguished intellectual heritage we aim to turn to advantage. That heritage goes back to our fifth president, James Marsh, who, in addition to inventing the modern system of academic majors and elective courses, had a passionate commitment to the practical application of knowledge. The legacy includes Vermont Senator Justin Morrill, author of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 that established higher education in the United States as a public good, democratically embracing the education of the working classes and extending the mission of higher education from the liberal arts to the practical

application of knowledge for the benefit of society. Our intellectual heritage encompasses the philosophy of UVM's most renowned graduate, John Dewey, a champion of American pragmatism, progressive reform, and experiential and lifelong learning. These assets, our human scale and our intellectual heritage, are foundations on which we propose to create value and quality that will embody and extend the distinctive contributions to American thought and education of our University and our State.

The Vision for the University of Vermont

To be among the nation's premier small research universities, preeminent in our comprehensive commitment to liberal education, environment, health, and public service.

The Mission of the University of Vermont

To create, evaluate, share, and apply knowledge and to prepare students to be accountable leaders who will bring to their work dedication to the global community, a grasp of complexity, effective problem-solving and communication skills, and an enduring commitment to learning and ethical conduct.

Goals and Objectives of the University of Vermont

As the cost of higher education increases, economic conditions ebb and flow, and competition for fewer students and for all sources of revenue intensifies, UVM is best positioned if it can make a case for educational distinction and distinctiveness and for student, faculty, and staff success. There is much evidence of these qualities already at UVM. Our challenge is to extend these farther and deeper so that evidence of excellence and success is encountered by all who have or seek a relationship with the University of Vermont. Adherence to, and achievement of, each of the following five goals, in parallel, will secure the academic quality and reputation of our students, faculty, and staff, and the distinctive UVM educational experience. Our progress in achieving the action plans developed in support of each goal will be the basis for UVM's sustained competitiveness in higher education.

Therefore, to realize our vision to be among the nation's premier small research universities, we must take these actions.

Diversity: Build a diverse and globally aware university community sustained by an inclusive, supportive, and just campus climate.

Objectives:

- Implement plans and programs to recruit and retain a critical mass of faculty, staff, administrators, and students from diverse backgrounds.
- Invest university resources and employ processes to build a transparent, collaborative infrastructure supportive of university members from diverse backgrounds.

- Cultivate an inclusive and responsive university climate underscored with fairness and equity.
- Increase diversity related knowledge, encourage interaction among diverse university members, and build understanding of differences through programs, services, and policies.

Academic Programs: Increase the quality and stature of academic programs and align undergraduate and graduate education with institutional priorities.

Objectives:

- Ensure that the resources, facilities, and support programs are available and policies and procedures are in place to attract, recruit, and retain the very best scholars to UVM.
- Make UVM a destination for the highest achieving undergraduate and graduate school applicants, and nurture their intellectual development by direct interactions with world-class scholars and creative artists.
- Through faculty processes, create greater cohesion of the undergraduate curriculum and greater depth of the graduate curriculum.
- Continue to build strength in the disciplines while removing barriers to, and providing rewards for, collaboration, integration, partnerships, and programmatic development across disciplinary lines.
- Establish structures and processes to align the academic program array with the vision and mission and link resource allocation with current or anticipated performance on agreed upon metrics of quality, national distinction, and institutional priorities.
- Link the outcomes and recommendations of the academic program review process to resource allocation.
- Provide institutional leadership and support for learning assessment activities aimed at the continuous improvement of the quality of undergraduate and graduate education.

Scholarship: Focus and strengthen research, scholarship, and the creative arts, and develop outstanding graduate programs that support the creation and sharing of knowledge.

Objectives:

- Continue to make focused investments in infrastructure and technology that support research, scholarship, and the creative arts.
- Align university policies and practices to increase support for and reduce barriers to productivity and excellence in research, scholarship and the creative arts.
- Meet the special needs of graduate students for financial support, professional development, support services, mentoring, and intellectual community.
- Create and implement a UVM Research Strategic Plan that provides a roadmap and a process to measure success and allocate resources to mutually enhance research foci and graduate education.

- Foster applications of discovery, innovation, and invention to improve the well-being of Vermont, the region, and the world.
- Earn external recognition that UVM numbers among premier small research universities.

Student Experience: Provide a distinctive university experience that prepares students for success as accountable leaders in the 21st century.

Objectives:

- Ensure that the foundations of a contemporary liberal education – critical thinking, high-level speaking and writing ability, research skills, and problem solving – permeate the academic experiences of all UVM students.
- Infuse a broad understanding of and personal responsibility for health and wellness, environmental stewardship, and sustainability throughout the academic and co-curricular experiences of all UVM students.
- Develop in students the knowledge and skills to be leaders through emphases on problem-based and experiential learning and by providing well organized opportunities for service learning and mentored research.
- Enhance a global perspective, transnational knowledge, and international experience among UVM students, faculty, and staff.
- Give every first- and senior-year undergraduate the opportunity to take courses and engage in co-curricular activities that facilitate successful transitions into and out of college life.
- Make the best practices and models of academic advising and mentoring available to every student on campus.

Institutional Efficacy: As an institution, model the highest standard of ethical conduct, public service, and strong commitment to lifelong learning.

Objectives:

- Provide compensation for faculty and staff that is determined by performance, market competitiveness, equity (including attention to basic needs), and recognition of the role of collective bargaining for unionized employees.
- Re-engineer administrative systems and support operations aligned with an ethic of service and accountability to students, faculty, and staff.
- Build a culture of participatory and transparent decision-making throughout the institution.
- Improve and sustain the university's role as a valued leader and partner in social and economic development in Vermont, the region, and the world.
- Expand faculty and staff development programs that provide the intellectual and personal tools for professional success throughout the career.
- Develop a capacity for institutional self-examination and purposefulness that produces the highest levels of effectiveness in university programs, services, and policies.

Implementation of University Planning Goals and Objectives

The President charged the University Planning Council (UPC) under the leadership of the Provost with developing and implementing a university strategic plan. The responsibilities of the President, Provost, UPC and other administrators are described below.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- reviewing the strategic plan and for monitoring progress towards its goals and objectives.

The President is responsible for:

- ensuring that the University strategic plan and its goals and objectives are implemented in an efficient and timely manner and keeping the Board of Trustees well-informed about the progress being made.

The Provost is responsible for:

- reinforcing a climate of accountability for the pursuit of the plans and achievement of priorities and goals
- ensuring that resources are allocated to institutional strategic priorities
- communicating regularly with the campus community concerning the progress of the university towards achieving the goals contained in the strategic plan

The UPC is responsible for:

- establishing institutional metrics to measure progress towards the goals and objectives of the strategic plan
- designing and overseeing the annual processes by which every academic, administrative and support unit develops and updates its own plan incorporating goals and objectives and performance metrics

The Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs, Directors, etc. are responsible for:

- ensuring that unit plans are developed, implemented and updated consistent with the University Strategic Plan. The expectation is that the strategic plan will influence and shape decisions at all levels of the University and that every member of the University community plays an integral role in the successful completion of the strategic plan and the accomplishment of the goals.

Strategic Planning Process

September-December, 2008

(a) Plan Elaboration

Upon consultation with the UPC and campus governance groups, the Provost will appoint a working group for each goal composed of UPC, faculty, staff members and students whose charge will be as follows:

Guided by a set of strategic principles developed by the UPC,

- (1) Review the action ideas developed at the 2007 Senior Leadership Retreat, the action plans developed for the previous strategic plan, the “projections” from the accreditation self-study, and any other data or materials, as deemed relevant and appropriate.
- (2) Add, delete, and/or modify action ideas with a goal to define and select those that are most critical to pursue in the next five years.
- (3) Prioritize the final action ideas.
- (4) Propose outcome metrics (performance indicators) for assessment purposes.
- (5) Propose a set of “Quick Wins” – changes related to the achievement of the strategic goal that can be implemented within a short time period and that will have a positive impact on many.

The UPC will synthesize the recommendations of the working groups to create an integrated strategic action plan and will oversee the development of an operational plan that will be implemented over the next five years.

(b) Organizational Alignment

Upon consultation with the deans and vice-presidents, the UPC will design a structure and process by which institutional units develop, implement, communicate, and update unit-level plans that are aligned with the university strategic plan and linked to the campus annual budget process.