

SUNY BROCKPORT STRATEGIC PLANNING

December 2, 2002

1. Preamble

Strategic Planning I

As we begin a new millennium, some things which we said at the beginning of our earlier strategic planning process remain appropriate:

Fundamental changes are occurring in the environment for higher education. Competition from public education, health care, public assistance, and so on has squeezed State support for public higher education. This has been exacerbated by a shift in public policy, wherein higher education is seen increasingly as a private good. Since these changes are structural, the likelihood is that this new environment for higher education is not a cyclical downturn but one that will be the long-term reality with which higher education will have to come to terms.

In this difficult environment, a top priority for the higher education sector is to build public confidence. Higher education institutions must become more effective in delivering important educational goals¾particularly student learning attainments and student placements¾and in documenting such institutional successes.

In these challenging times, even more than usual, what is needed is an institutional plan, a sense of where the institution wants to be five to ten years from now.

Brockport completed its strategic planning process in late 1998, and has been implementing it ever since. And what have we accomplished in those not quite three years? Here are some excerpts from our Middle States self-study report:

We have a new Mission Statement and a Memorandum of Understanding with SUNY. We have designed, and to a considerable extent implemented, a strategic plan. The administration has been reorganized, including the creation of a new division of Enrollment Management, and we have implemented a structure of shared governance that includes five campus-wide “supercommittees.” We have significantly raised admission standards while meeting or exceeding enrollment targets, and devised and largely implemented a new general education program, including three competency tests required for graduation.

Our assessment plans are progressing well and we have re-established a cycle of periodic program review. Administrative units have defined their goals and are measured by performance indicators. Three significant reports have addressed advisement and faculty

and professional staff roles and rewards, and the College now has a financial model, a technology plan, a facilities plan, and ambitious goals for College advancement. A new student information system is coming on line on schedule and below budget. Our faculty-in-residence program and a stringent new alcohol policy have improved residential life. Campus life has been re-energized by collaborative and diverse programming.

Our renovated science building is now state-of-the-art and Hartwell Hall, our flagship building, has been restored to its original beauty. The student union and one residence hall are currently undergoing major renovation. We have achieved all of the above with limited additional resources and in a state climate of fiscal conservatism.

And here are some excerpts from the report of the Middle States visitation team:

The Team recommends SUNY Brockport for pursuing ambitious goals to achieve great things.

The campus has achieved substantial change in a short period of time. This in itself is notable, but what makes this achievement even more remarkable is the fact that there is widespread satisfaction and pride with the changes that have occurred.

In conclusion, the Team believes that SUNY Brockport has appropriate and clearly defined objectives, that it has established conditions under which its objectives can be achieved, that it is substantially achieving them now, and $\frac{3}{4}$ given the necessary resources $\frac{3}{4}$ that it should be able to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

To be sure, not all the results cited in the Middle States report can be attributed to the strategic plan, but surely many of them can be. And few would contest the claim that the strategic plan has transformed Brockport. But as the campus agreed early on in the planning process, strategic planning cannot be a one-shot affair but must be ongoing, and there is a general sense on campus that the time is right to restart the planning process in an environment that remains highly challenging.

Strategic Planning II

A strategic plan for an institution is a plan that is intended to *reposition*, perhaps in some ways even to *reinvent*, that institution. It will be recalled that the following principles guided our earlier planning process:

- (A) Our highest institutional priority is to help our *students succeed*.
- (B) We will provide, emphasize, and compete on the basis of, *quality*.
- (C) We will *demonstrate* quality and not merely claim it.

Principle A places Brockport in the tradition of institutions whose primary emphasis is on student success—particularly student learning and development. So even though Brockport has faculty who are exceptional scholars and who conduct first-class research, the College is not, and does not aspire to be, a *research-intensive* institution. Similarly, principle B means that, though Brockport is a public institution and is very affordable, it takes pride in the fact that the College delivers a college education of *high quality* and wishes to be judged on that basis. It may be noted in

this connection that, since much of what students now need to know is genuinely difficult and challenging, Brockport needs to be sufficiently selective in its admissions to ensure that its students are capable of such learning. Finally, principle C means that Brockport has what is sometimes called a culture of evidence and takes *assessment* seriously.

These principles continue to appear to be the right ones to guide Brockport in the next planning process. Adherence to these principles has enabled Brockport to reposition itself in appropriate and productive ways—to become a high quality public college that is student learning centered and that is demonstrably strengthening its operations continually. The Appendix will suggest a number of specific areas in which we will need to strengthen our operations—and reposition Brockport further—that is, further within the constellation of universities and colleges of which it has become a member.

A final, important note. Brockport offers both many undergraduate programs and a substantial number of graduate programs. In many ways these are very different populations, with different interests and concerns. Let me affirm that they are both important to the College, though no attempt has been made to give them, as it were, equal billing.

2. The Context of System Planning

As it so happens, the System Administration of the State University has launched its own strategic planning process. What might be the relevance between System planning and Brockport planning?

- It certainly seems reasonable to treat the substance of System planning as an “*envelope*” for Brockport planning, in the sense that Brockport planning should comport with the broad outlines of the *contents* of System planning.
- System planning has a fairly standard *format*—standard for many large organizations—with the following components:
 - Factual description.
 - Mission.
 - Vision.
 - Values.
 - Goals.
 - Strategies.

The consensus of those who had preliminary discussions of these matters is that there is no compelling reason for Brockport to follow this format.

3. Description, Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals and Strategies

It may nevertheless be useful to sketch quickly the sorts of things we would say if we did follow the System format.

Factual Description

The State University of New York College at Brockport is a selective, comprehensive institution offering 40 baccalaureate and 24 master's degrees. ...

Mission

The State University of New York College at Brockport:

Is committed to providing a liberal arts and professional education—at both the undergraduate and graduate level—for those who have the necessary ability and motivation to benefit from high quality public higher education;

Has the success of its students as its highest priority, emphasizing student learning, and encompassing admission to graduate and professional schools, employment, and civic engagement in a culturally diverse society and in globally interdependent communities; and

Is committed to advancing teaching, scholarship, creative endeavors, and service to the College community and the greater society by supporting the activities of an outstanding faculty and staff.

Vision

SUNY Brockport is among the very best—defined in terms of student success—comprehensive, public, regional colleges in the nation.

Core Values

We value ...

- The search for *truth* and the *academic freedom* with which to conduct the search.
- *Responsibility*.
- *Integrity*.
- *Impartiality*.
- *High expectations* and the continual effort to strengthen *quality*.
- Quality and the continual effort to *demonstrate* quality.
- *Openness*.
- *Community*.
- *Civility*.

Goals and Strategies

It is when we discuss goals and strategies that the most extended and intense discussions will take place. We have already noted above that Strategic Planning I followed three principles, namely:

- A. Our most important mission is to help our *students succeed*.
- B. We must provide, emphasize, and compete on the basis of, *quality*.
- C. We must *demonstrate* quality and not merely claim it.

Within that larger framework, seven questions were raised:

- 1. What *students* will we teach?
- 2. What will our students *learn*?
- 3. What will we *teach* our students?
- 4. How will we *support* teaching and learning?
- 5. What *resources* will be needed to realize our aspirations? How will such resources be *provided*?
- 6. What *systemic* changes will we need to make?
- 7. How will we get both internal and external constituencies to *recognize* our quality?

Some possible questions for the new planning process are laid out in the Appendix.

4. Planning Structures and Processes

The structure which worked well in the first planning process can be used again, but with some modifications.

- A. It still seems to be a genuinely good idea to involve Faculty Senate standing committees, with Faculty Senators chairing, or co-chairing, the *planning committees*. Two additional features appear desirable:
 - Planning committees should include invited volunteers who possess relevant expertise.
 - Each planning committee should again have administrative representation.
- B. There should again be a large overall *Planning Committee* consisting of designated administrators and Faculty Senate leadership—president, vice president, past president, and chairs of the planning committees.
- C. We again need an overall *coordinator* for the planning process. (Colleen Donaldson served in this role before, and has agreed to serve again.)
- D. In the first planning process the President served informally as the *facilitator*. The consensus is that he should serve in this capacity again, since this ensures that he continues to be, as he was in the first planning process, fully engaged with the planning process.
- E. A systematic and coordinated *communication plan* should be devised and implemented.
- F. Planning committees will begin their discussions by identifying important variables that might bear importantly on planning. These will be referred to an *Environmental Scan Committee* that will collect data, perform analyses, and provide support for the planning committees.
- G. Best practice suggests that the planning process should only generate a *small number* of substantial planning initiatives—in practice we might limit each

planning committee to no more than 2 proposals—so that the planning has sharp focus. Best practice also suggests that the set of planning initiatives coming out of the new planning process must be *prioritized*.

- H. All planning proposals will be in the form of *business plans* which include not only programmatic proposals but, as appropriate, such matters as need assessment, market demand, and resource needs.
- I. The planning proposals will be *reviewed* by
 - Budget and Resources Committee,
 - Faculty Senate, and
 - President’s Staff.
 both individually and collectively,
 - individually to see whether the business plan is sound, and
 - collectively to ascertain the sufficiency of resources and the appropriateness of resource allocations.
- J. A formal *assessment process* should be designed for the new planning process.

5. Timeline

2002 January	Half-day retreat for President’s Staff to discuss restarting strategic planning.
2002 February or March	All day retreat for Planning Design Group—President, President’s Staff, Deans Council, Faculty Senate Leadership—to discuss the planning process. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning structures and processes. • Planning topics. • Design of a formal evaluation process for strategic planning.
2002 April	Middle States process complete
2002 November	Planning committees constituted. Orientation for members of planning committees.
2003 January/February	Planning committees begin work.
2003 August	Completion of planning process and production of new draft strategic plan.
2003 September through November	Campus discussion and review of strategic plan. Revised plan ready for implementation.
2004 spring	Implementation of new strategic plan.

APPENDIX: GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. *What students will we teach?*

Now that we have basically achieved all our admissions goals from the first planning process, it is time to reconsider the first planning question from before, namely, ‘*what students will we teach?*’ What plans, if any, should we develop for the following?

- Number of undergraduate students? Number of graduate students? (Undergraduate-graduate mix?)
- Within the undergraduates, number of Liberal Arts students? Number of students in the professions? (Liberal arts-professional mix?)
- Within the undergraduates, number of freshmen? Number of transfers? (Freshmen-transfer mix?)
- Can we establish a targeted total student FTE count?
- Recruitment of out of state students?
- Recruitment of international students?
- Recruitment of minority students?
- Student retention?
- Academic parameters for freshmen, transfers, and graduate students? Should we consider raising standards for transfer students? What is the freshmen quality goal after we achieve SUNY Tier 2 status?
- The scholarship program was put in place to “jumpstart” the admission selectivity process. Has it served that purpose? In what form and at what level of funding should there continue to be a scholarship program as we go forward?

2. *How will we help our students prepare for success?*

To answer this question, we must of course achieve some agreement on what constitutes student success? An ambitious answer is this: to have acquired appropriate habits of the mind and habits of the heart

- that prepare the student for personal success—for a substantial *career* in his or her chosen field and
- that enable the student to lead a life of active *citizenship* and community participation.

According to one survey, business leaders believe that college graduates lack some important knowledge and skills needed for career success—specifically, communication, understanding of business and its processes, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills. Some in the academy have dismissed such beliefs and simply insisted that liberal arts is the best all-purpose preparation for college students. Such a response is clearly inadequate. At the very least, we need to specify what we believe the important college outcomes to be and to review systematically whether liberal arts indeed produces those outcomes.

This is by no means the only thing Brockport can do to help its students to succeed:

- In a world so suffused with market mechanisms, would it not be desirable for all Brockport students to have a certain basic level of *business savvy*—say, sufficient for the preparation of a good business plan?
- Increasingly, indeed, meaningful field experiences—especially *internships*—have become the best avenue to employment after graduation. We are already doing well in student internships for the professions, such as education and business, though even here there is room for improvement. We need to think about meaningful field experiences—cooperative education, internships, and practica—for all students, including students in the liberal arts.
- Above all, the College should follow best practice and put in place an integrated process of *career planning and development* that begins with the first day that a new student arrives on campus and continues for as many years as the student remains on campus. Faculty and staff must collaborate to make certain that students have educational experiences that will help them develop into competent, dependable, and attractive candidates for jobs. That means we must weave all the things we now provide for students—Academic Planning Seminar (APS), advising, field experience, internship, résumés preparation, preparation for interviews, job referrals—into an intentional and well-designed career planning and development process. All undergraduates—not just seniors—need to be invited to job fairs, workshops, and career planning sessions throughout their careers as students at Brockport. The Career Services Office must develop close working relationships with corporate recruiters, who should be invited to conduct workshops on such topics as job search skills and in-demand employment skills.

3. *How will our students learn?*

In asking ‘*what will our students learn*’ we were concerned chiefly with content. But there are important questions about process, which we might couch as ‘*how will our students learn?*’

In asking, ‘what will our students learn’ we rightly focused on learning. As is now generally agreed, the key outcome in education is *student learning*. Teaching is perhaps the most important means for producing student learning, but it is a means. The focus on learning also underscores the point that in the educational process the student should be an *active participant* rather than a passive receptacle. These observations have a variety of implications.

- First, since student learning is our bottom-line goal, we need to pay serious attention to how students learn—their “learning styles”—and adjust how we teach. There is some evidence to suggest that many students ‘prefer field-dependent approaches to learning, which means that they perform best when working in small groups on activities that

have applications to concrete, real-world issues and situations. In contrast, most college instructors are field-independent learners, preferring strategies such as observing, listening, abstract analysis, and individual reflection.’ This is a large and complex topic where considerable literature exists.

- Second, both the literature and individual experience indicate that classrooms that offer “active” learning—and there is a wide variation of techniques here—are more interesting and more engaging to students. How do we as a College best incorporate this insight into our conduct?
- Third, it is clear that we need to study the processes of learning and teaching with the same creativity and professional attention that we now devote to research. Actually we already possess a good deal of data about our students’ educational experiences. But we have not made sufficient use of such data in the design of our students’ educational experiences.
- Fourth, it follows that one critical area for action is to help newly appointed regular faculty—through orientation programs, mentorship programs, etc. —to develop into creative teachers as well as creative researchers. Actually such development opportunities should be extended to all faculty, since even seasoned faculty can profit from candid assessments of their teaching.
- Finally, with the reorientation that puts learning first, we need to consider systematically the proper use of the new learning technologies in our educational processes. There are two motives here: quality and productivity. Can we, by making judicious use of the new learning technologies, (1) add quality to a Brockport education and (2) raise productivity?

4. *How will we plan for appropriate instructional capacity and equitable teaching loads?*

Since faculty perform the core of the work of the College, it is important for us to make plans and set goals for instructional capacity for the College as a whole. Indeed, Middle States suggests that the College needs to deliberate about and set ‘campus-wide goals for faculty numbers, composition and strength; and campus-wide goals for professional staff strength, composition and workload.’

To be able to do this, we need to have a plausible concept of faculty teaching load and principles that enable us to allocate equitably the instructional work of the College:

- The current definition of faculty work is in terms of course sections taught, but there are well-known problems with this definition. For one thing, this definition does not do justice to different levels of effort required in different sorts of courses. For another, this definition does not even do justice to different levels of effort in courses of the same sort—e.g., when there are different numbers of students.

- There is pretty wide agreement that the most principled definition of faculty teaching load is rather in terms of number of student credit hours (SCH) produced.

So far so easy. But this is just the beginning of the work on this issue. Any adequate SCH-based concept of faculty teaching load will need to devise acceptable principles which recognize all the nuances and subtleties in differences of faculty instruction—undergraduate v. graduate instruction, performance-based classes v. non-performance-based classes, classroom activities v. lab activities v. clinical experiences, writing-intensive courses v. non-writing-intensive courses, and so on. Fortunately, many institutions have already adopted the SCH-based model, and there is a rich literature on the subject.

5. *How can we strengthen college governance?*

There is a strong tradition of *collegial (or inclusive) governance* in American colleges and universities, according to which the management of a college or university should be collaborative, and faculty and staff should be consulted and should be partners with the administration in decision-making on a range of major issues.

It is widely agreed that this model is flawed in important respects:

- Over the last century faculty at larger institutions have been fragmented into academic disciplines and departments. This, conjoined with the strong market pressures on faculty in many areas, have created an academic culture in which faculty focus is first on their academic discipline, then to their department, and only last to their institution. This sometimes makes it difficult to get faculty commitment to—or even interest in—broad institutional goals.
- By the nature of the academic tradition, wherein extensive consultation, debate, and consensus building must take place before any decision is made or action taken, collegial governance processes are long, complex, and time-consuming. This ill comports with the needs of the time for institutions to be nimble and to react quickly to changing conditions.

Despite this, there can be little doubt that we should adhere to the broad outlines of collegial (or inclusive) governance, for at least two important reasons:

- The consent of the governed is important in any institution, but nowhere more so than at a college or university, where faculty and staff are “knowledge workers” who do the principal work of the institution. Donald Kennedy writes: ‘the faculty is the heart of the institution, and if its members are not active participants and stakeholders in any proposed change, then change is unlikely.’
- Faculty and staff are an extraordinary repository of specialized knowledge and expertise.

Our challenge is to strengthen Brockport's system of collegial governance to maximize its strengths and minimize its flaws. In what follows we will raise three specific governance challenges that we face.

- The model of collegial governance adopted by the College is undoubtedly inclusive. The tradeoff is that it has significantly increased the *workload* of faculty and professional staff. What can be done—this specifically includes possible restructuring of the Faculty Senate—to streamline the governance structures and processes of the College so that inclusiveness can be achieved without excessive increase in committee work?
- Over the last few years, the College has developed an administrative/governance structure that has a number of campus-wide “*super committees*.” Since these committees have been in place for a few years, it is now time to raise a few questions about them. Are they functioning productively to further the College's strategic priorities? Do they fit into the collegial governance structure at Brockport? Should they continue to exist? If so, what if anything should be modified to enhance their work?
- The *SUNY Brockport Self-Study* document for the 2001-02 Middle States accreditation review makes the following important recommendation: ‘Devise effective strategies to improve linkages between resource needs and budget realities, using the Budget and Resource Committee as a central forum to identify and establish campus-wide priorities.’ (p. 140) The Middle States visitation team concurred with this recommendation, and indeed highlighted it as one of their central concerns about the College. This issue undoubtedly overlaps with the immediate bullet above, but clearly comprehends more than the content of that bullet—because the resource allocation framework alluded to includes many more elements than the Budget and Resource Committee.

6. *How can we become more, and more strongly, embedded in the Rochester community?*

‘The bonds between the university and society are particularly strong in this country,’ writes James J. Duderstadt. ‘Historically our institutions have been responsible to and shaped by the communities that founded them.’

Colleges and universities are responsible to their communities in two principal ways, ways that may obviously intersect and overlap:

- through their *academic* programs, and
- through their *outreach* and *extension* programs.

It is clear that, in terms of being responsive to the needs of the community, we can err in two directions. We can be too responsive, and try to be all things to all people. We will not only fail in this attempt, we will end up with no center and no direction. On the other hand, and in my view this is to a considerable extent true of Brockport, we can be too unresponsive to the community.

To be sure, we are an important regional resource in work force development—particularly in the social professions (teaching, nursing, social work, and so on), and our MetroCenter takes many of our programs and courses downtown. But Rochester is clearly in many ways a high tech community—with a distinct emphasis on optical research. Yet we have as an institution few academic programs that are germane to this focus. Even in areas where we have academic programs, we have relatively few partnerships or collaborative arrangements. It is arguable, however, that for Brockport to flourish, it will be important for the College to be much more and much more strongly rooted in the community. The last question I will raise, then, is *'how can we become more, and more strongly, embedded in the Rochester community?'*

The following are some possible suggestions for becoming more integrated into the Rochester community:

- Consult business leaders when updating or restructuring curricula.
- Invite corporate participation and involvement on the College's advisory boards.
- Establish one or more corporate speaker series to help students understand better how business functions.
- Establish cooperative education (co-op) courses, internships, and practica.
- Develop structured exchange programs that place faculty in the workplace and business personnel in the College.
- Initiative structured exchange programs between academic career advisors and corporate recruiters.