Academic Master Plan Committee Interim Report, January 2016

Summary

The Academic Master Plan Committee has devoted its work to three tasks: 1) Understanding the Academic Master Plan as a method of setting academic priorities and allocating resources; 2) Opening and conducting a broad-based dialogue within Academic Affairs regarding the specific issues in the committee charge; 3) Situating the Academic Master Planning process within internal and external circumstances.

Item 7 of the committee charge addresses campus wide dialogue: “If and when wider campus input is needed in this process, make recommendations to the Provost and meet with her to discuss how to best proceed with this.” The committee decided that campus input was needed at the very beginning of the process. We opened the dialogue by publishing a statement in the Daily Eagle with our charge attached to it. This statement received broad comment, eliciting particular interest from units such as Drake Library and the Honors College that wanted to confirm their inclusion in the dialogue. Second, the committee conducted a broad-based survey with open ended questions. This type of survey is the foundation for virtually every AMP the committee has reviewed. Seeking a middle ground between benchmark models and our specific charge, the committee wrote a survey that sought first to identify the values that currently give identity to our academic programs and second to understand how members of our community interpret external challenges. The survey responses and both qualitative and quantitative analysis of it will provide a context for the prioritization criteria we are charged to develop. The response rate to this survey was 41.8%, totaling 267 responses and generating over 150,000 words of text.

Our charge also asks us to “review and build on the materials and ideas related to Academic Master Plans.” We undertook this task in three phases: 1) The committee reviewed
and discussed several Master Plans, paying particular attention to the ways in which the academic profiles and the scope of the projects were or were not applicable to our task; 2) The committee reviewed supplementary information provided by Institutional Research and from consulting providers such as Ruffalo Noel Levitz and the Educational Advisory Board; 3) Each member of the committee read Robert C. Dickeson, *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services* (Jossey Bass, 2010). This research and the committee’s discussions of it have given us a subtle understanding of the complex relationship between the aspirational and resource allocation aspects of the AMP process.

The committee used discussion of the issues that are listed in item 6 of our charge (recruitment, online/hybrid, career services, assessment) to contextualize the project so that our perspective looks outward as well as inward. These conversations helped us to define the boundaries of our interest, as well as issues that we will need to address. For example, in thinking about “alternative modes of delivery,” we discussed a wide variety of options for scheduling classes that are practiced at other institutions. As we talked, we came to recognize that while the general structure of program offerings is outside of our charge, questions of maximizing accessibility within programs is likely to be a priority. Further, methods of optimizing accessibility is likely to vary from program to program. Also, this discussion revealed significant differences in the way accreditation and licensure requirements influences faculty recognition of student opportunities in specific job markets. This internal factor gives faculty in disciplines with accreditation and licensure requirements a higher level of awareness of the actual placements of their graduates. We are glad to be able to report that these discussions did not elicit strong alienation or antagonism between schools at the College at Brockport. We do however, think that the schools often operate according to different assumptions and different principles so that each faces pressures and celebrates accomplishments that are invisible to their colleagues across campus.

Item 5 of the Charge asks that we make recommendations on processes for implementation. When asked about this item, Provost Zuckerman proposed that this be done by dialogue between Deans and Departments. The committee has yet directly to address this issue, but it is worth noting that there are a variety of models for implementation.

Making it through a steep learning curve of research material, developing terms to address program prioritization as colleagues, and conducting a robust survey of the Academic
Affairs community has been the work of the AMP Committee thus far. However, we all recognize that items 2, 3, and 4 of the Charge are the most important and difficult parts of the project. The committee is currently pivoting toward these tasks. We are working from 2 assumptions: 1) resources will remain flat for the life span of this AMP, 2) The goals we set should be achievable within five years.

We will complete our analysis of the survey data in February. Our intention once we are able to articulate the expressed priorities of the survey respondents is to coordinate with the Provost in conducting a second public dialogue, through open forums surely and through focus groups if time allows. Assuming recommendations regarding priorities are acceptable to our colleagues, the committee will integrate the granular advice that comes from additional public discussion into criteria to recommend that the College use in prioritization.

Issues listed in item 6 have been discussed by the committee as a whole and will be divided among committee members for further research and consideration. We intend to return to these issues again toward the end of the project.

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The members of this committee are eager to ensure that The College at Brockport gets the highest value out of all of its resources. We also respect the important task of recommending criteria for academic program prioritization that, if adopted, will have significant implications for every program on campus. The members of the committee are able to invest their best efforts in this process by trusting that similar challenges are being faced in other divisions across campus. If resource prioritization is done with the broadest standard of collegiality both inside and outside of Academic Affairs, the development and implementation of an Academic Master Plan can help ensure that resources are well prioritized. AMP trusts that other units on campus are going through similar exercises to sustain the trust and openness that this sort of shared experience can bear.

Also, we feel it is important to underscore that it is not within the purview of the Academic Master Plan committee to make recommendations regarding specific programs. Our
responsibility is to recommend criteria and a process for prioritization in the context of the campus’s values. Also, if adopted, any process AMP recommends will take some time to implement. Thus, any actual reallocation based on our criteria for prioritization will not be realized for a significant span of time after our final report is completed in August, 2016.

Origin and Context

The idea of preparing a Master Plan for the Academic Affairs division of The College at Brockport emerged from the Academic Affairs Leadership Team’s (AALT) retreat in summer of 2015. In preparation for this meeting, AALT reviewed analysis and data that both explained the use of Academic Master Planning and particular ways in which it could be advantageous to our community.

Academic Master Plans are either developed by administrative committees or by faculty committees. Both of these procedures have advantages and disadvantages. Provost Zuckerman chose to convene a committee of faculty and charge them to devise and recommend a plan that has four fundamental goals: 1) to identify the current academic values of the faculty; 2) to translate the values into priorities the faculty wants to set for the next 3 to 5 years; 3) to break out the priorities into criteria according to which the priority of programs can be evaluated; and 4) to recommend a process for implementation.

In August, 2015, Provost Zuckerman appointed co-chairs of the committee:

**Greg Garvey** (Professor, English)

**Cathy Houston-Wilson** (Professor, KSSPE)

The Provost asked the dean of each of the five academic schools to appoint a senior faculty to represent his or her college. The membership of the committee is:

**Denise Copelton**, (Associate Professor, Sociology; Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences),

**Pamela Haibach**, (Associate Professor, KSSPE; Health and Human Performance),

**Susan Stites-Doe**, (Professor, Business, Business Administration and Economics)

**Peter Veronesi**, (Associate Professor, EDI; Education and Human Services)
Committee Charge

Provost Zuckerman gave the committee the following charge:

To: The Academic Master Plan Committee members
From: Provost Mary Ellen Zuckerman
Re: Committee Charge
Date: 10/9/2015

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this committee that will be making key recommendations about the future initiatives for Academic Affairs. The Academic Masters Plan will identify the academic path for the College at Brockport for the next five years. It will also fold into the College’s new Strategic Plan (which the College will begin work on this academic year). Essentially we want to identify, from an academic affairs perspective, where are we and where do we want to go?

Specifically, I am asking this committee to do the following:

1) Review and build on the materials and ideas related to Academic Master Plans that the Academic Affairs Leadership team reviewed and worked on in Spring/Summer 2015.
2) Identify ways to fulfill our values of excellence in program, innovation in existing programs, creation of new programs and engaged student learning within a liberal arts institution with professional programs.
3) Identify criteria for determining programs to invest resources in.
4) Identify criteria for determining programs that need to be revitalized or that we should not invest in further.
5) Identify the processes and data to be used in looking at programs.
6) Make recommendations about the following in the academic master plan:
   a. assessment processes and data
   b. alternative modes of delivery
   c. responsiveness to prospective student interests
d. responsiveness to the job market  
e. competition from other programs/colleges  
f. other factors the committee finds to be of importance in this process  

7) If and when wider campus input is needed in this process, make recommendations to the Provost and meet with her to discuss how to best proceed with this.  

I would like to see an interim report in January 2016 and a final document in August 2016.

Synthesis of AMP Committee Deliberations

During the Fall 2015 semester the AMP committee divided its work between three tasks  
1) Learning about the Academic Master Planning process, goals, and typical outcomes.  
2) Gathering information from the Academic Affairs community on values and priorities.  
3) Developing a bird’s eye view of academic programs at The College at Brockport

The Academic Master Planning process and its goals  
Resources Consulted

Academic Master Plans at other Universities  
Interview with Bill Proulx, co-chair, Oneonta AMP task Force  
Educational Advisory Board Reports, especially  
“Revitalizing the Program Portfolio”  
“Future Students, Future Revenue”  
Dickeson, Robert C. Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services (2010)

Interim Conclusions  
• There are two types of AMP processes: one incorporates the entire campus, the other is focused tightly on academic programs.  
• Campuses primarily interested in cost savings hew close to the Dickeson criteria, those more interested in direction-setting define their own criteria.  
• AMPs, as one report puts it: “In practice, . . . most institutions find that cost savings are relatively small. The real value of the prioritization
process is often to make transparent which programs are underperforming and to generate consensus that those programs need to improve or face a reduction in resources.” (Revitalizing, xii)

- Rather than revealing surprises regarding program performance, AMP processes put data behind awareness of different performance levels across programs.
- The AMP process moves institutions toward a standard set of metrics that are useful in comparing diverse programs in the future.
- In the negative, AMPs add a level of self-analysis to an already repetitive self-analysis regime.

Consulting the Academic Affairs community of the College at Brockport

The AMP committee includes two members (Denise Copelton, Pamela Haibach) with skill in conducting surveys and in the type of qualitative analysis that will lay the foundation for committee recommendations. Crafting a survey consistent with the committee Charge, AMP asked open-ended questions designed to evince common values and priorities rather than detailed suggestions. The committee also sought to gain insight into issues related to faculty awareness of issues in recruitment and to connections between programs and the opportunities graduates have after completion.

The survey below was open to the faculty from November 12—December 5, 2015:

1. What values make us good at what we do at the College at Brockport?

2. What steps should we take to strengthen our academic culture and community at the College at Brockport?

3. How can we provide a high quality educational experience to our students while being mindful of our current budget situation at the College at Brockport?

4. Please comment on any of the external factors below that may impact your academic culture.
• Economic trends
• Market trends
• Demographic trends
• Technological trends
• Competition from other colleges

5. Are there any other issues you would like to address that are important in shaping the academic culture at the College at Brockport?

The response Statistics on the Survey was:

1. Which of the following best describes your position at The College at Brockport?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Faculty (including full-time, part-time, tenured, tenure-track, or visiting)</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Professional Staff, UUP</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Staff, non-UUP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Non-teaching administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey generated over 150,000 words of response from 267 total respondents. 84% of respondents self-identified as teaching faculty. The response rate among those who could access questions was 41.8%. The survey was open to 619 total teaching faculty (336 full time and 283 part time). We cannot determine response rates for these different categories, but can assume that a lower response rate from part time faculty lowered the overall response rate.

AMP will address the data in three ways: First, each member is reading the responses in order to familiarize him or herself with the tones, voices, and repeated themes that come through.
Second, Institutional Research is doing a qualitative analysis of the first three questions, all of which are focused on internal issues. Third, Dr. Copelton and Dr. Haibach are conducting a qualitative analysis of all of the data. The qualitative survey data will be coded for major themes using an inductive approach. Key themes, as well as illustrative quotes will be reported.

The Office of Research, Analysis, and Planning reported the following analysis of survey question 1, “What values make us good at what we do at the College at Brockport?":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Shared Values</th>
<th>Being Student-centered</th>
<th>Excellence</th>
<th>Being Collaborative &amp; Collegial</th>
<th>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</th>
<th>Liberal Arts Tradition</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of mention:</strong></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrative quotes:</strong></td>
<td>“Commitment to helping students develop and succeed academically, personally, and professionally”</td>
<td>“commitment to integrity and excellence in contributions”</td>
<td>“collegiality”</td>
<td>“desire to embrace cultural differences”</td>
<td>“commitment to a liberal arts education”</td>
<td>“value scholarship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“student centeredness”</td>
<td>“academic excellence”</td>
<td>“caring and community”</td>
<td>“celebrating and respecting diversity”</td>
<td>“education serves a human end, not a corporate one; it serves a civic purpose, and not merely a personal one. A proper college education, in the tradition of the Liberal Arts…is directed to the whole person.”</td>
<td>“care quite a bit about teaching and research”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“putting students first”</td>
<td>“we strive for excellence”</td>
<td>“support and teamwork”</td>
<td>“diversity of programs, emphasis on diversity within curriculum”</td>
<td>“we value critical thinking, rigorous analysis, and intercultural understanding”</td>
<td>“faculty scholarship, esp. with student participants”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“continuous program improvement through assessment of student outcomes”</td>
<td>“working together as a team for the good of the students”</td>
<td>“valuing of diverse students”</td>
<td>“truth seeking”</td>
<td>“faculty as successful scholars”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“support for colleagues”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“sincere commitment to research that keeps the faculty motivated and at the forefront of their fields”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“interdisciplinarity”</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“shared governance”</td>
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</table>

The College at Brockport’s Academic Program Portfolio
The resources AMP has reviewed address external and internal demand, recent enrollment trends, and demographic profiles of students and faculty. The Committee has consulted a wide variety of sources to gain insight into the big picture of Brockport’s Academic program profile:

- Academic Program Demand analysis (Ruffalo Noel Levitz)
- Enrollment Opportunity and Risk Analysis (EAB)
- Department Data Book (Fall 2013)

Summary of research materials

The committee reviewed several AMPs with particular attention to the AMPs of SUNY Oneonta, The University of Cincinnati, and Washington State University. These documents are informative in several different ways. The Oneonta AMP was particularly impressive in its information gathering phase. However, the conclusions of the Oneonta AMP were less impressive as they seemed largely both predictable and modest in relation to the amount of work that went into the project. In this sense the Oneonta Process was both a model and an object lesson. The AMP from the University of Cincinnati was especially useful in its focus on the values of the university and its effort to translate them into actual activities and commitments within academic programs. However, this AMP only dealt with the information-gathering phase of the project and thus was almost totally aspirational. It did not address the actual process of prioritizing some programs, let alone the process of de-prioritizing others. The Washington State AMP stays very close to the Dickeson model. It had the clearest criteria for defining the strength of programs and for prioritizing them. The clarity of the Washington State criteria provides makes them useful, but they are not strictly transferable. Washington State is the primary land grant university in Washington and its AMP was largely directed toward raising its regional and national profile as a research center. The report on the result of the Washington State process in the Education Advisory Board report “Revitalizing the Program Portfolio” underscores the different objectives an AMP can serve at Washington State and the College at Brockport.

Studying these documents underscored several unique qualities of our obligation.

First: most Academic Master Plan processes are comprehensive, addressing all elements of the Campus. Our obligation is to develop a resource prioritization plan for the Academic Affairs Division of the College at Brockport. We take this to mean degree programs offered by academic departments, Drake Library, Information Technology, and non-degree granting
academic programs, including the General Education Program, Delta College, and the Honors Program.

Second: Most AMP processes run for several years, involving longer information gathering phases, elaborate implementation apparatus, formalized assessment regimes, and often a timeline to initiate a new Academic Master Planning process. This long process is more than our circumstances allow. The committee also thinks it is unnecessary to achieve both the criteria for prioritization and directional recommendations we have been asked to make. Nonetheless, these two factors are motivating us to be both cautious in an effort not to overstep the direction our data can support, and precise in an effort to identify priorities that are aspirational, achievable, and can claim support from the instructors and staff of academic affairs.