

Final report of the Academic Plan Committee – May 2, 2003

The Academic Plan Committee had two charges from the College Senate during the 2002-2003 academic year.

Charge One: review of the Strategic Plan from the College Planning Council.

The group met in September and reviewed the Strategic Plan. The document was also available on the Buffalo State web page for the Buffalo State community. An email was sent by the committee to the entire faculty and staff to solicit comments or suggestions regarding the document. There are several statements incorporated into the document that stress the fact that this will evolve and develop over time.

The Report of the Academic Plan Committee to the College Senate was given at the October 18, 2002 meeting. The following points are summarized here.

1. Since the initial plan was submitted, the CPC has produced a chart with time lines for the completion of the tasks that have been set forth by the Strategic Plan. Previously To Be Determined time frames have been focused and defined. As a second working document, priorities have been established based on financial realities with some flexibility.
2. In the beginning of the document, perhaps in the planning context “Characterized as a comprehensive regional institution” there could be a phrase explaining the distinctions between the classifications of staff members.
3. The strategic direction 5 has not been developed very well. In Strategic Direction 5.1, there are several action steps that have omitted the provost while having a role in academic affairs: 5.1.7, 5.1.8, 5.1.10. The section 5.3 dealing with shared governance is very weak; it needs more recognition and support.
4. We continue with the recommendation for a focus on developing a sense of community for the campus. This should not be ignored or minimized.
5. The plan continues to be very administrative. We as the Academic Plan Committee are voicing our concern about how the office of the Provost, for example, can oversee all the parts in this document.

The document has been produced in a very collaborative manner. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our suggestions to the College Planning Council. The Academic Plan Committee recommends approval of the Strategic Plan.

Charge Two: to review the Intellectual Foundations Report in relation to the Strategic Plan.

The following points are summarized. The report should be studied for further details.

The report is a good beginning; however, the committee members feel that there is more work to be done to make it truly fit the student at Buffalo State.

There are areas on campus, both academic and support areas, that are worried about the restructuring of their departments based on a plan that many feel needs more consideration and development.

The Academic Plan Committee discussed the Intellectual Foundations Report following the outline of the Strategic Plan and considered appropriate comparison for several areas. This committee report is not to be considered a final statement. Considering the current fiscal constraints and the enormity of this project, it should be allowed to progress deliberately and in incremental steps as funds become available.

The charge from the SUNY Board of the Trustees for General Education was designed to contain a set of minimum requirement for each campus's General Education Program. There is no provision in this plan for a separate course(s) to incorporate the infusion of critical thinking, problem solving and technology. Because this is an unfunded mandate, and resources are scarce it does not make sense at this time for the campus to attempt to implement two new courses that would put any additional drain of scarce resources. The committee members also felt that the BSC 100 and 300 courses were not defined in depth.

Strategic Direction 1: Quality Learning Experiences; Buffalo State will engage students in rigorous learning experiences, both in an out of the classroom, that heighten their aspirations and transform their lives.

Strategic Initiative 1.1 Revise the general education program to include a diverse intellectual foundations requirement, thus creating a program that distinguishes the undergraduate experience.

Action Step 1.1.2 Develop and reinforce high expectations for student performance and program rigor across the curriculum.

The first word in the action step is "develop." It is necessary to *develop* a person before we can consider enriching him or her. There is no recognition of the need for this type of developmental foundation coursework before entering the BSC 100 course. The Intellectual Foundations Report has totally ignored this aspect.

Action Step 1.1.6 Develop and expand programs, services, and opportunities that address the full scope of student development and link classroom experiences with out of class experiences. Focus on leadership, citizenship, social relationship, and skill development.

There is concern for the programs that service different populations (EOP, STAR etc.) will fit into this format. Is not one of the functions of Buffalo State to teach less developed students survival skills in their professional lives?

Strategic Initiative 1.2.1 Improve the recruitment process and implement new and strategies for attracting and retaining diverse full-time faculty and staff members.

There was some discussion (and disagreement) on the Committee as to whether IFR would attract new faculty or cause them to reject (or leave) BSC. With BSC already-strong commitment to diversity—a commitment that has attracted at least some of our faculty—implementing a program that seems like that found at conservative, private liberal arts colleges may indeed cause some of the most “diverse” faculty not to come or not to stay at BSC.

Strategic Initiative 1.4 Improve the first year experience for all incoming freshmen.

The First Year Program in the IFR appears to be a good beginning to fulfill this area. There is some concern regarding the advisement of students as it relates to the first year program and how undeclared majors will be accommodated.

Strategic Initiative 1.5 Facilitate timely completion of degree programs.

Action Step 1.5.2 Increase the availability of classes.

With the diversion of resources to the BSC 100 and BSC 300, how will we serve the need for more class availability? Will the professional staff be able to teach courses in BSC 100? Many of our professional staff have teaching credentials and offer developmental and basic courses at this time. What of our qualified part-time faculty? Will they also be excluded?

Action Step 1.5.3 Identify and redress academic policies and practices that have an adverse effect on the timely completion of degree programs.

Ultimately, we see little attempt to coordinate the student retention and developmental imperatives addressed so forcefully in the college’s recent Middle States initiative.

Strategic Initiative 1.6 - Strengthen instruction and learning through the infusion of technology is not supported by the Intellectual Foundations Report.

The Committee believes that any general education program at Buffalo State should explicitly outline how technology be integrated into the learning environments, and how the effectiveness across different disciplines will be ensured.

Strategic Initiative 2.1 - Coordinate and integrate research throughout the campus is not supported by the Intellectual Foundations Report.

As stated above, research is another basic component of a general education program that needs to be explicitly outlined in the document.

Action Step 2.1.4 in particular details the importance of student creativity and research initiatives that are not addressed in the general education proposal.

Strategic Initiative 5.3

Equally essential to the college's Strategic Plan are the twin notions of shared governance and commitment to collegial community as proposed, the IFR restricts the ability to teach BSC 100 to full-time faculty and posits the existence of a course that has not been submitted to the college's Curriculum Committee, let alone developed beyond rudimentary generalisms. The Academic Plan Committee would like to see any potential courses routed through the Curriculum committee for appropriate scrutiny, thus allowing for a partial phase-in of the courses.

While the Intellectual Foundations Report is consistent with the spirit of much of the college's recently adopted Strategic Plan, the Academic Plan Committee is as yet unclear about how its implementation would affect the full force of the Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted:

Cherry Searle: Chair of Academic Plan Committee