

Academic Affairs Annual Report  
August 10, 2009

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**Introductory comments:**

As with most years, academic year 2008-09 presented the University with challenges as well as opportunities. The national economic meltdown alongside internal changes made for a year of consultation and reference. Working closely with faculty members in the colleges and the library, the deans and associate vice presidents strove as a unit to meet the demands of the academic year.

In what follows, I have described the accomplishments and challenges that held our attention and required our collective planning and action in Academic Affairs.

**Master Academic Plan:**

The Academic Affairs Master Academic Plan (MAP) contains the guidelines for planning for all members of the Academic Affairs unit, i.e., faculty, staff, and administrators. Outlined in the MAP are six goal statements:

- Provide high quality educational programs and services that support students' professional, personal, and citizenship development.
- Hire and support excellent faculty
- Help build the future of northern Minnesota: engagement and service
- Enhance diversity
- Support the teaching and learning environment
- Secure financial stability through appropriate enrollment growth and program development

**Specific Goals for the academic year:**

The specific goals for AY 2008-09 were identified collectively within Academic Affairs as:

- Continue making progress toward college reconfiguration;
- Move toward implementation of the reformed liberal education program;
- Move toward successful accreditation of BSU's teacher education program by Minnesota's Board of Teaching; and
- Move completion of the University's self study report steadily toward the upcoming accreditation visit of the Higher Learning Commission in March, 2010.

In addition to these specific goals above, other projects were undertaken, appointments made, and challenges met.

I. College reorganization, begun with discussions in summer, 2007, was initiated to bring departments together that had a reasoned base to the groupings. Two smaller, more specifically career knowledge-based colleges were formed alongside a larger arts and sciences college. With the expectation that like-minded colleagues sitting together at department and college meetings would bring a new kind of energy to collaborative programs and interdisciplinary curricula, the department faculty met together now in: the College of Business, Technology, and Communication; the College of Health Sciences and Human Ecology; and the College of Arts and Sciences. The new configuration led to the development of a sharper identity for the University as recorded in the descriptive statement: “Bemidji State University is a university of arts and sciences with selected professional programs.” The task for AY 2008-09 was to bring the college faculties together in meaningful exchanges at college meetings, at Academic Fora, and at all-campus, faculty meetings. (USP Strategy C)

During the course of the year, we determined that the inclusion of the Physics Department in the College of Business, Technology, and Communication was not having the effect intended, and the program with its faculty was moved to the College of Arts and Sciences. A second change occurred with the placement of a speech position within the Department of English. There remains the task of finding permanent department designations for three departments and their faculty - physics, chemistry, social work – whose faculty number fewer than five. Those programs will be placed together with another program in the upcoming year in order to reach the requisite number, five being the count for which reassigned time is given the chairperson, per the IFO Master Agreement.

The college reorganization was aimed at student success as faculty within the shifted departments met with new and newly-discovered colleagues to consult on new approaches to teaching and/or to offering curriculum. That work continues into the fall of the upcoming academic year (2009-10) as the faculty will meet in an all-day workshop to commonly discuss programs and curricular offerings. The challenge to fill in the fissures created by the new college structures continues. (MAP 1-1b) (University Strategic Plan – USP – Strategy A: Initiative 1)

With student learning at the center of the college restructuring, a secondary goal was to align resources and personnel within the three colleges to best leverage funds within and without the traditional university finance structures. The deans of the two career knowledge-based colleges have been given the task of establishing partnerships and associations with outside constituents and bodies to stabilize and enhance the funding to CBTC and HSHE, in particular. The partnerships thus created have the second function of providing pathways for our students to enter the world of industry or career through internships or other community based service/work. (MAP 1-1A-1B, 3-3A, 6-6A) (USP Strategies A, B, D)

Part of the restructuring resulted in the assignment of Mr. Bob Griggs to oversee library operations. Mr. Griggs, associate vice president for Extended Learning and Library, provided much needed stability to the supervision of the library’s resources and its position in the campus at large. Mr. Griggs’ quiet and trust building approach to his new role brought the faculty and staff together in common meetings, working collectively on projects, and providing insight and guidance into areas needing reform. This first year for Mr. Griggs was, indeed, a successful one

for him personally as well as for the University as a whole. (MAP 1, 5-5A-5B) (USP Strategies A, B, D)

II. Student learning outcomes are also at the center of the second of AY 2008-09's goals, namely, movement toward full implementation of the new liberal education program. The new program, proposed to and approved by the Faculty Senate in May 2008, is the product of a four-year project on the BSU campus. After attending an American Association of Colleges and Universities general education seminar/residential workshop, faculty and administrators involved in the seminar returned to campus to assist in forming the Liberal Education Task Force that took on the recommendation from the Faculty Senate to review and to recommend a new program. (Prior to the AAU&C seminar/workshop in Newport, Rhode Island, members of the BSUFA Liberal Education Committee had been, in fact, reviewing the cafeteria-style program at BSU.) The Task Force, comprised of staff, faculty, and administrators, met regularly for three years, under the leadership of Dr. Colleen Greer, to establish student learning outcomes and the structure for a program to meet those learning goals. (It should be noted that although the Liberal Education Task Force did not set out to meet any specific set of student learning outcome goals, the Task Force did establish a list of outcomes that mirror well the national guidelines for such courses of study established by AAC&U.) Two critical thinking workshops for faculty, led by national experts from The Foundation for Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University in California, took place in early summer. The second workshop, this one a two-day workshop set for October 2 and 3 is to be held this fall term. Faculty are compensated for their participation in the workshop and the creation of a course for the university inquiry category in the new program. These compensation monies were set aside during the 2007-10 budget planning/adjustment. The core values and signature themes mentioned in the MAP are being incorporated into the content of courses offered through the Liberal Education Program, and assessment of student learning will remain a critical aspect of the evaluation of the program. (MAP 1-1A-1C) (USP Strategy A)

III. The third of the four goals for Academic Affairs listed at the outset of this report is the successful accreditation of BSU's professional education programs through the Minnesota Board of Teaching Review. Dr. Patricia Rogers was hired into the permanent position of dean of the College of Health Sciences and Human Ecology during this past year, and was instrumental as interim dean of that college in moving the Professional Education faculty forward to address the BOT report based on the BOT team's visit to campus last fall, 2008. Accreditation of the education programs was granted by Ms. JoAnn VanArnum and her colleagues with specific goals set out for the program. A team of dedicated professionals within the department has been working to address the concerns and issues raised in that report. Progress is being made and we are optimistic that the program will meet the goals included in the accreditation report. The continuation of the professional education programs is critical to the mission of the University and to its service to the region and the state. (MAP 1, 3, 5,6) (USP Strategies A, B, D)

IV. The upcoming Higher Learning Commission visit scheduled for March 2010 is viewed by the campus community with a mixture of excitement and nervous anticipation. Planning for the visit, with the establishment of criteria committees and a university budget plan to meet associated incurred costs, began in 2007. With the committees in place and the co-chairs named, the groups went to work in earnest during the summer of 2008 under the capable leadership of

Mr. Robert Griggs and Dr. Elizabeth Dunn. After Dr. Dunn was named the interim dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Marty Wolf was named to the faculty position as faculty co-chair for the self-study report and for the visit. The teams worked throughout the academic year and submitted their draft reports to Ms. Susan Hauser, chair of the English Department, who is assigned the writing of the self study document. Ms. Hauser has established a time line for the document's completion and looking forward to a December 15 deadline for submission of the complete report to Ms. Kathy Berglund, graphic designer and publications coordinator. We continue to move toward the fourth of the AY 2008-09 goals listed above, that of a successful visit from HLC in March 2010. (MAP 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) (USP Strategies A, B, C, D)

V. Among the unexpected challenges faced by the University during this past year were the economic contexts, national, regional, and state wide, in which we were forced to conduct the academic business of the University. Faced with reductions in state allocation and the need to address gubernatorial unallotments, the University's officers set the target of a \$2,500,000 reduction for the 2010-11 biennium. We in Academic Affairs were assigned \$1,000,000 as our target. Together as a deans' council, and in consultation with faculty and other constituencies across the campus, we attained the goal and were able to avoid massive layoffs or reductions in faculty. The team approach exhibited on the part of all in Academic Affairs made a painful situation bearable as we collectively moved forward toward the target and future planning. (USP Strategy D)

Despite the challenge presented by the enforced budget reduction, we were able to release and hire into ten of twenty one probationary faculty positions. The decisions leading to the hires required development of criteria for the necessity of the position to be aligned with the mission of the University and to address the critical issues of student enrollments. Positions in business, accounting, design technology, and nursing led the way. Within this group of new faculty hires, we met goal statements two and four of the MAP to insure sensitivity to issues of diversity as we hire faculty. Six of the faculty hired are international faculty or faculty from underrepresented groups. (MAP 1, 2-2A-2D, 4, 6) (USP Strategies C, D)

VI. At the same time we were forced to make budget reductions, we were able to hire into a key position. Planned for in the 2007-10 budget adjustments, we hired Dr. Patrick Guilfoile as associate vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Patrick Guilfoile, who holds a PhD in Biology, immediately began streamlining processes, reworking forms, addressing issues of data collecting and analysis, and spearheading assessment discussions. The previously constituted "Gaps and Trends Committee," developed during the college restructuring, began its work under his guidance. The committee, whose role it is to oversee assessment across the entire University, has begun to embrace the magnitude of its tasks and to develop measures and methods by which "trends and gaps" can be identified at the University and ultimately addressed. Data gathered through the work of this committee and the office of the associate vice president will lead Academic Affairs and the University to make decisions based on university mission imbedded in reliable data. The increased amount and reliability of data gathered will assist the deans and department faculty in making scheduling, budget, and overall management decisions. With Dr. Guilfoile's leadership, we moved toward effectiveness and efficiency within policies and procedures. We worked to update load sheets for faculty, improve availability of data through department "snapshots" and other means, support common processes across colleges, and

encourage increased regularity of five-year academic program reviews. (MAP 1-1C, 2-2B, 6-6A) (USP Strategies A, C, D)

This past year also saw the hire of the Chief Information Officer. Mr. Mitch Davidson assumed the role of CIO for BSU and for NTC on July 1. Pulling the various staff together, Mr. Davidson fashioned a technology master plan that charts the direction of the University and the College in terms of technology purchasing, adaptation, and use. He has successfully completed his first annual report, outlining the accomplishments and challenges from that area.

VII. The new generic nursing program enjoyed its first year of enrollments, with the first cohort of students being presented with lab coats in an official ceremony led by the nursing faculty. The initial monies for the program came from HRSA funding and from monies recouped and reallocated from the 2007-10 budget adjustments. Reacting to the regional need for a highly educated nursing and medical assistance staff, the University moved its plan to establish the program into full implementation during AY 2008-09. Accordingly, faculty have been hired at nationally competitive salaries to insure that the program has a successful start. (MAP 1, 2-2A, 2D, 3-3C, 3D, 4-4B) (USP Strategy A, B, D)

VIII. The University continues to support the use of technology as a pedagogical tool. Nearly 30 classrooms had either major or minor technology upgrades. Approximately \$400,000 was spent in this area which includes classrooms associated with the Sattgast remodel. The faculty continue to use the laptops provided through the University's laptop exchange program for classroom presentation. Even with a reduced budget in technology, part of the \$1,000,000 Academic Affairs budget solution, the University and Academic Affairs remains committed to providing students with learning opportunities facilitated through the use of state-of-the-art equipment. (MAP 1, 2, 5-5D) (USP Strategy A)

The primary goals for Academic Affairs in AY 2009-10 remain:

- Retain HLC accreditation
- Implement the new liberal education program
- Retain accreditation of the Professional Education programs through the Minnesota Board of Teaching

The Master Academic Plan remains our guide as we continue to review curriculum, scheduling, offerings, and student learning outcomes to bring our academic programs into line with the University mission and vision. That work continues as we begin the new academic year.