Implementing Penn State’s Strategic Plan – February 2010 Update

From Quality Endeavors Newsletter (http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/features/Issue126.html) 
Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

Priorities for Excellence: The Penn State Strategic Plan 2009-10 through 2013-14 was approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2009 and is in its first year of implementation. There are 38 total strategies for the seven goals in the plan. For the first time, a Strategy Implementation Matrix is included as an appendix to the plan to track implementation. The matrix identifies the leadership for each strategy, the fiscal impact of the strategy, and the projected year in which implementation of the strategy will begin. Some strategies are targeted to begin in 2009-2010, while others will begin in later years.

Penn State is integrating the implementation of these strategies with its operational planning and budgeting within the current economy. Executive Vice President and Provost Erickson provided an overview of this approach for the January 26, 2010 Faculty Senate meeting. Provost Erickson also asked each of the leaders of the strategies set to begin in 2009 to provide a six month progress report in January 2010. Here are some of the activities included in those reports.

**Goal 1: Enhance Student Success**

Within Goal 1, three strategies have been targeted for activity in the first year:

- **Strategy 1.1:** Expand Learning Outcomes Assessment
- **Strategy 1.2:** Expand and Promote Research and Active Learning Opportunities
- **Strategy 1.3:** Improve Key Student Transition Experiences

- Emphasis is on clear student learning goals developed by faculty. Goals for many of these programs are available on the Web. Additionally, research is being conducted on distribution of grades in large enrollment courses to identify more successful course-taking patterns and the impact of general education introductory science courses on student retention in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The goal is to identify recommendations for more effective student advising and scheduling.

- The intercollege minor in Civic and Community Engagement which focuses students on what it means to contribute beyond the classroom, laboratory, or studio is now available at eight campuses. The Office of Undergraduate Research has increased information available about research opportunities for undergraduates, including the summer Discovery Grant program, travel support for undergraduate research conferences, the annual Undergraduate Exhibition, and a Web site for posting information about undergraduate research opportunities.

- A Student Transitions Steering Committee has been formed to study how the student transition process can be made seamless. Additional activities include increasing information to students transferring to University Park, including 10 things students need to do, information on academic and co-curricular services and resources, and a calendar of Welcome Week events targeted for students coming to University Park from the other campuses. A University Park visitation day is being planned for April 2010 for students in their first year at the campuses who intend to enroll at University Park for their junior year.
**Goal 2: Advance Academic Excellence and Research Prominence**

Current activities address four strategies within Goal 2:

- **Strategy 2.1:** Focus on Faculty Recruitment and Retention
- **Strategy 2.3:** Enhance the College of Medicine’s Research and Clinical Capabilities
- **Strategy 2.4:** Consolidate Academic and Administrative Programs Through Targeted Reviews
- **Strategy 2.5:** Acquire Additional Endowments to Enhance Faculty and Student Quality

- Several campuses located in close proximity to one another are planning joint hires of selected faculty. The economy has also made it possible to hire some exceptional talent on a fixed-term basis.

- The Provost is chairing the Academic Program and Administrative Services Review Core Council, a group of faculty and administrators from University Park and the campuses appointed by President Spanier. Over the next 18 months, the Council will work closely with three coordinating committees: University Park Academic Review, Campus Academic Review, and Academic and Administrative Services Review. The goal is overall cost savings, not cost-shifting. The Core Council has a target of identifying $10 million in permanent cost savings or non-tuition revenue enhancements over each of the next several years.

- The College of Medicine and Penn State Hershey Medical Center has several major initiatives that will increase research and clinical capabilities: the Regional Medical Campus planned for University Park, the Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute and the Northern Appalachia Cancer Network, Penn State Hershey Children’s Hospital, scheduled to begin construction in 2010, Penn State Hershey Rehabilitation Hospital, currently under construction, and the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, implemented by the College of Medicine in partnership with colleges and institutes at University Park.

- Development and Alumni Relations reports that since June 2009, two additional endowed chairs, professorships, and faculty fellowships have been designated bringing the total to 269 and funds available for this have increased by over $2 million bringing the total to $27,795,285.

**Goal 3: Realize Penn State’s Potential as a Global University**

Initiatives have been implemented in three strategy areas:

- **Strategy 3.1:** Establish the Office of Global Programs as the Locus of International Strategy
- **Strategy 3.2:** Build International Partnerships at Home and Abroad
- **Strategy 3.5:** Increase International Student Enrollments

- The University Office of Global Programs has been restructured. Changes have been made in the areas of information technology, to improve services to students and academic units, in risk management, including addressing this issue in international contracts and agreements, and in staff development, providing cross-training for increased responsiveness to customer needs.
Steps have been taken to initiate the first two Global Engagement Nodes (GEN):

- Penn State's Alliance for Earth Sciences, Engineering, and Development in Africa (AESEDA) program moved from the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences to the Office of Global Programs, and will be the foundation and driving force for the GEN strategy in Africa.
- Agreements were signed for a Joint Energy Research Center at Dalian Institute of Technology and a faculty and graduate student exchange program with Peking University, both in China.

The Education Abroad Fair has been expanded, and new student exchange programs have been approved in four countries, with six more possible new programs under review. Increased government and corporate sponsorship led to an increase in international students at Penn State from 217 in fall 2006 to over 500 in spring 2010. A Web-based pre-arrival program, expansion and improvement of the peer mentor program, and implementation of a new iLEAP (International Learning Edge Academic Program) arrival program improved orientation for international students.

Goal 4: Maintain Access and Affordability and Enhance Diversity

Activities are focused on the current cost of higher education:

- Strategy 4.1: Position Commonwealth Campuses for Access and Affordability
- Strategy 4.4: Sustain Investment in “For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students”

The University remains committed to the tuition differential and the 2+2 enrollment model to assist students with access and affordability. Additionally, in fall 2009, 864 first-year students at 19 campuses were the recipients of the Chancellor Awards scholarship program. The waiver of out-of-state tuition for students from select out-of-state high schools was piloted at several campuses, and, following review, may be expanded to additional high schools or campuses.

Since June 2009, more than $17 million in additional funds have been raised toward the “Ensuring Student Opportunity” component of the capital campaign.

Goal 5: Serve the People of the Commonwealth and Beyond

Current initiatives focus on sharing programs across locations:

- Strategy 5.1: Deliver Programming Using Technology and Media
- Strategy 5.3: Share Programs within Regions

Outreach is establishing a Video Based Learning Network to better serve adult learners. The network will aggregate students across the campus system and leverage faculty capacity to serve learners across the Commonwealth. Eleven campus locations have been identified, with a goal of having five campus locations completed during the first half of 2010.

Campus Academic Officers at the 19 campuses are developing operational principles and guidelines for successful cross-campus collaboration. This will enable increased enrollment in programs such as the degree in Applied Psychology offered collaboratively by Penn State Beaver, Greater Allegheny, and New Kensington, and the eLearning Cooperative, coordinated through Outreach.
Goal 6: Use Technology to Expand Access and Opportunities

Current initiatives to make the most effective and efficient uses of technology include:

- Strategy 6.1: Expand the World Campus
- Strategy 6.2: Invest in Robust/Flexible Infrastructure
- Strategy 6.3: Become More Efficient
- Strategy 6.4: Protect Security of Infrastructure

- Efforts continue to increase World Campus enrollment. Actions include establishing a common set of course delivery standards to ensure a consistent look, feel, and functionality across all online courses, establishing one centralized Student Technical Support (Help) Desk, decreasing the number of budgetary and revenue sharing models to reduce complexity, building online faculty capacity, improving online pedagogy, and identifying new online programs.

- An eLearning Strategy committee has been charged and is expected to make recommendations this spring for the future directions of eLearning at Penn State.

- Information technology (IT) reviews are being undertaken by both a subcommittee of the Integrated Administrative Systems Steering Committee and an external consultant, who will be guided by internal advisory and oversight committees. This external review will create data about Penn State’s institutional IT environment. The goal is effectively balancing delivery of services and aligning IT with other strategic goals.

- Information Technology Services and the University Libraries have numerous collaborative initiatives, including:
  - investigating ways to improve search capability across library databases already in place
  - defining requirements for digital repositories, as part of the Libraries’ responsibility for records management
  - collaborating with partner libraries in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) on a shared digital repository, which will spread the cost of developing technology across the CIC and beyond
  - contributing to Indiana University’s pilot project to develop software for a digital publishing infrastructure

- A group has been formed to make recommendations about how to address the explosion of data, and develop a storage infrastructure that will cost-effectively keep up with demands, while making it easy to secure and share the data.

- The Ecollaboration Committee is looking at ways to consolidate calendaring and e-mail services across the University.

- The final version of the Information Privacy and Security Report was published, containing eight recommendations in areas including governance, risk assessment, formal credentialing, and network architectures.
Goal 7: Control Costs and Generate Additional Efficiencies

Activities focus on two strategies:

- Strategy 7.2: Better Utilize Instructional and Research Facilities
- Strategy 7.3: Reduce the Rate of Increase of Health Care Costs

- Two committees have been established to develop a comprehensive understanding of how classrooms are scheduled, the systems people are using for scheduling, and systemic approaches to improve use of facilities. One committee is reviewing all current policies, procedures, and actual practices, looking for opportunities to improve utilization, equity in assignment, collection of correct scheduling information, and flexibility in scheduling sequences, and eliminating ‘gaming’ the systems. This committee will recommend policies and procedures to ensure centralized recording of scheduling data, and policies and procedures related to security for students, faculty, and visitors. The second committee will review the current information systems screens and reports that are used for scheduling, and recommend improvements and new reports to assist in analysis.

- The Office of Research Information Systems has developed the IRB eSubmission process. The Materials Research Institute (MRI) and the Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment (PSIEE) have merged their grants and contracts offices to provide more streamlined and efficient support.

- Penn State Hershey Medical Center will open a new clinical practice site in Centre County in 2010. This practice will increase the number of providers in the region and enable Penn State to offer an increasingly robust set of wellness and prevention benefits to its community. The increase of future University health care costs will be reduced through changes to employee benefits that continue into retirement for those hired starting in January 2010.

Implementing the strategies of the current plan has just begun. Progress reports will continue to be shared with the University community.