Penn State shield logo with black text and blue shield

Unit Strategic Plan:   
Smeal College of Business

2014/2015 through 2018/2019

A more detailed version of this plan can be found at:

<https://intranet.smeal.psu.edu/deansoffice/strategic-plan-2014-2019>

# Smeal College of Business Strategic Plan

# 2014-2019

The vision of the Smeal College is to be one of the very best business schools in the world, producing leading-edge business research brought to life in active learning environments by an outstanding faculty, and preparing graduates for productive careers in business.

The College mission is to achieve the vision by meeting three goals:

* Providing extraordinary education—research-informed, business-engaged, globally aware education that prepares students for professional achievement, societal contributions, and lifelong learning;
* Producing the highest quality basic and applied research with impact;
* Building our culture of integrity, diversity, service and sustainability.

To be counted among the very best, our education must indeed be extraordinary, and our research must be impactful. Our best scholars should be recognized as field leaders, and our best departments should be top-ranked. To achieve this we must increase faculty strength, which will take several forms: attracting and retaining highly productive faculty members, providing research resources to faculty and doctoral students, capitalizing on our research strength in the undergraduate and professional master’s curricula, and reinforcing the culture of a research-centered enterprise. The most direct route to the resources needed to fully achieve the vision to be among the best is funding commensurate with the size of our programs, to support faculty strength in line with schools considered to be the best. We will build on recent success on this dimension to continue to pursue (2014) and implement (2015) a share of tuition revenue return when well-established enrollment targets (e.g., 5000 undergraduates) are exceeded, at a rate reflecting an appropriate portfolio of tenure-track, clinical, and fixed-term faculty. We will aspire to faculty strength reflected in a student-faculty ratio of 25:1, which is at the median of those of the Big10 and the highest among our aspirational schools, yet well below the 2014 ratio of 36:1. A practical stretch goal for the coming five-year period is a ratio of 30:1.

In providing extraordinary education, we will focus on the traditional disciplines of business; educate well-rounded students ready to work and who are sought after by employers; facilitate leadership and professional development for our students; and support student-led philanthropy, service, and learning. We will measure our success in this arena by success in achieving the learning goals we articulate for each of our programs, by student and faculty ratings of our programs, recruiter ratings, placement rates, and starting salaries. A particular focus for undergraduate placement will be to improve placement at graduation from approximately 75% in 2014 to over 80%.

In producing research with impact, we will be thought leaders in the business disciplines, building on strength where we have it, investing with new anchor faculty hiring where necessary to ensure strength across all the disciplines, and encouraging interdisciplinary research efforts in areas of Smeal strength such as sustainability. . We will measure our success by department rankings for publication in top journals; citations of our research by scholars and implementation of our recommendations by practitioners; general media coverage of our research, Ph.D. placements, and peer recognition of our faculty for research excellence through awards, editorial positions, and fellowships in professional associations.

In developing our culture of integrity, diversity, service, and sustainability, we will build on our new and existing infrastructures with the goal of transforming thought and action in each arena. We will measure our success by changes in attitudes and perceptions as measured by climate surveys as well as by student, faculty, and staff involvement in integrity, diversity, service, and sustainability activities. For integrity and diversity specifically, we will develop new survey measures of awareness, accountability, and advocacy, and strive for improvements in these measures over time. We will build our service culture by promoting professional development opportunities for staff as well as faculty.

Extraordinary education, research with impact, and stronger culture will be achieved by implementing the strategic plans of the academic departments, programs, and other planning units, as well as by employing nine specific college-wide strategies. The extraordinary education strategies are curricular and co-curricular innovation, creating a business credential for non-business students, reaching new communities of students through new online education offerings, and strengthening our global perspective. The research strategies are building research capacity, support, and culture; and continuing renewal of research center activities and missions to address today’s business realities. Our culture building strategies involve new efforts to promote honor and integrity, diversity, and sustainability.

## Goal: Provide an Extraordinary Education

### ***Strategy 1. Explore Curricular and Co-Curricular Innovation.***

The Smeal College is, by enrollment, one of the largest business colleges in the nation, yet it is distinctive for the remarkable quality of its student body. With over five thousand undergraduate students, our challenge is to scale quality education while providing meaningful personal and professional experiences. In an environment characterized by relatively high tuition necessitated by relatively low state support for education, we must continually find ways to improve the quality of the student experience.

The quality of students’ experience is determined by the quality of our curriculum and instruction and the co-curricular programming we provide. Thus we must ensure that each of these elements of the experience is extraordinary.

We have a rigorous curriculum that the faculty owns and in which it rightfully takes great pride, informed by our best researchers as well as experienced and talented instructors. Recognizing that the business world changes rapidly, we must review the curriculum and identify and implement innovations to ensure that it is cutting edge; to do this we shall initiate a major review of the curriculum overseen by a committee of the faculty, with participation by alumni, students, and recruiters, charged with evaluating our curriculum relative to best practices, and making recommendations for improvements and innovations. Subsequently, we will review the progress of curriculum innovation on a continuous basis.

Our co-curricular programming such as leadership development for Sapphire Program students, the Nittany Lion Fund, Wall Street Bootcamp, and the activities of the Career and Corporate Connections office are strengths for the College. Equal strengths are the student-led activities–like THON, the Smeal mentoring program, and consulting projects for non-profits. Yet not all of our students can participate in leadership development, some do not avail themselves of career support often enough or soon enough, and too few students are meaningfully involved with student organizations. We can improve the quality of the student experience by benchmarking, reviewing, and updating co-curricular activities as needed; and by exploring the possibility of expanding the availability of leadership development, career preparation, communication skill development, spreadsheet skill development, and similar activities. To this end, a subcommittee of the curriculum review committee will be charged with leveraging co-curricular activities and the Penn State culture with the revised curriculum to ensure an even more extraordinary education for Smeal students.

### ***Strategy 2. Design and Implement A New Business Credential for Non-Business Students:***

There is excess demand for the Smeal major, and campus and system demand for a business credential. One of the recommendations from a Smeal working group was to revise the distributed approach of providing business content to non-business students and develop a ‘business certificate’ that has a structured approach and set of courses, providing Smeal quality to other Penn State students and relieving demand pressure on Smeal major courses. We can do this, provide a valuable service to the university community, and generate resources to support our mission by calling on our core strength to create (2014) and implement (2015) such a certificate. With prerequisites in Accounting, Economics, and Statistics and comprising entry-level courses in Business Law, Finance, Management, Marketing, and Supply Chain Management, the certificate program will initially be offered in the summer sessions, and will subsequently be offered during the academic year, and eventually online. To ensure that this new avenue of accessibility to Smeal for Penn State students complements and does not detract from our mission to deliver extraordinary education, the college has worked (2015) with the Provost to ensure delivery of new resources necessary to deliver certificate components. Deployment of resources will correspond with a phased implementation of certificate offerings during 2015-16 and 2016-17.

### ***Strategy 3. Reach New Communities of Students Through Online Education:***

Online course and program offerings are growing rapidly at the national level; this trend is expected to increase, and online education is likely to be an important element in educational offerings at all levels in the future. Smeal’s online efforts to date have focused on professional Master’s, in particular the University-wide iMBA and Smeal’s MPS in Supply Chain Management, developed and offered by the Department of Supply Chain and Information Systems (SC&IS). The SC&IS program has been very successful, providing business-engaged education for students around the globe. It has led to a strong collaborative relationship with General Electric (GE), which currently has more than 250 students enrolled, with documented impact on business performance of tens of millions of dollars per year. This success can inform and guide our increased effort in the online domain—new online offerings should build on our strong core activities.

The online iMBA program is in need of reformatting and refreshing, and is currently a collaborative effort across four campuses. Smeal does not currently lead this effort, but will work to assume a leadership role in the near term. We will position the College for such a role by developing some MBA-core and elective classes for the online format, with the intention that these courses will provide a curricular foundation for collaborative efforts with other Penn State Colleges to provide business-informed professional master’s programs in other fields. Smeal’s engagement in undergraduate online offerings will be through the business certificate, which will involve no more than one course from each department. Experience gained thereby will inform subsequent decisions regarding which, if any, Smeal majors should be developed for online delivery. We will pursue other opportunities guided by the principle that the quality of our online offerings must be at the highest level.

To support an expanded online effort, we have created an eLearning Design and Innovation Group (eLDIG) that will be charged with supporting faculty in developing their courses for online delivery. The unit will report to the Dean and its director will have instructional design experience. A portion of the resources generated by success in this endeavor will be set aside to support design innovation for course offerings or programs important to the College that do not generate revenue directly. The College will provide guidelines for compensation and for requisite eLDIG resources for online course development and delivery.

### ***4. Globalization:***

Business is global. The volume and importance of international trade have mushroomed, and now even small businesses source from abroad or sell their products overseas. Understanding the global business environment and being able to function effectively on foreign soil are essential for tomorrow’s business leaders. An extraordinary education must equip our students to be successful in this world.

International engagement can be enriching for our faculty and students and a way for us to gain the visibility needed to attract the very best international students and industry partners, or it can be a costly distraction. To ensure that our efforts enrich the college community, we will continue to focus on high-quality student study abroad and internship experiences that add value for students, and will seek high-quality sponsored research collaborations.

Our College is a leader at Penn State in the proportion of its students that study abroad in semester programs and extended-duration summer programs, at about 25% of the student body. Our international business minor is the most popular minor at Penn State’s University Park campus. Yet we can develop more international business course offerings outside of the minor. Our faculty is globally aware, but we can do more to capitalize on international collaborations members of the faculty have pursued. We can elevate our international programming by strengthening our students’ understanding of international business and culture, and supporting more international research collaborations for our faculty. We will commit to the elevation of our international programming by appointing an Associate Dean for International Programs, with the charge to increase student participation in extended and summer programs to 33%.

## Goal: Produce Research with Impact

### ***Strategy 5. Build Research Capacity, Support, and Culture.***

The Smeal College of Business is a center of excellence in one of the largest, most comprehensive research universities in the world. Research productivity is vital to our mission in its own right, and inseparable from lifelong learning, which in turn ensures the vibrancy of what we deliver on our mission to provide extraordinary education. Moreover, it differentiates our outreach to business and industry.

Smeal has built an academic community that is recognized to be among the best in the world in selected disciplines. To be counted among the best, all of our fundamental disciplines of business will need to be recognized as excellent. Some of our areas of research excellence are small in size relative to those of the best business schools, and should grow as resources become available through returns to entrepreneurial or core activities. Faculty hiring, whether for replacement or for additional capacity, should enhance our research productivity as well as our course offerings.

Support for the research mission is multidimensional. While grant support for research in business is scarce, we can support grant applications better for those opportunities that do exist by rewarding meaningful attempts to secure external funding and returning more overhead recovery to departments and researchers that are successful in winning grants. Private philanthropic support for research is increasingly important in making the margin of excellence in business schools, and we will increase our focus on faculty support in development efforts, with the goal of bringing research and summer support for research productive faculty members into line with such support in the very best business schools. Additional endowed named professorships and chairs will be sought to improve the College’s ability to attract and retain world-class faculty members. Endowments will also be sought to support departmental and college-wide research seminars and symposia. Entrepreneurial activities that generate resource flows can also support research through increased Ph.D. stipends, research expense funds, and summer salary support. We will also make and support arguments to use such resources to support tenure-track hiring. We will further build our research culture by celebrating and promoting examples of our research with impact through web and print media.

### ***Strategy 6. Foster Continued Development of Research Centers and Institutes:***

Our centers and institutes enable the sharing of resources and knowledge in multiple communities of scholars and practitioners. They foster and forge connections between our students and the professions in which they seek to participate through employment or research contributions, and so contribute directly to not only the research mission, but also the education mission of the College. In large part, centers and institutes are supported by membership subscription, broadly construed. The existing centers have evolved organically from areas of strength within the college, and have established missions that are in some cases specific to those areas of strength. In the coming five years, we will seek to enrich the student education and research connections of our centers, and continue to explore opportunities that enhance the alignment of center and institute missions with that of the College.

Our eight active research centers are planning new activities in response to changing societal and business conditions. Notably, we have just completed a search for a new executive director for the Center for Supply Chain Research, a center with a 25-year history, currently engaging over 50 corporate sponsors and many Smeal faculty and students. The highly successful Institute for the Study of Business Markets recently celebrated its 35th year, with over 70 corporate sponsors. The Institute is in the process of revisioning its future, and we will begin a search for its next executive director. The Center for Teams and Negotiation and the Center for Managing Technology and Organizational Change are both undergoing renewal with new faculty leadership. Smeal’s sustainability strategic plan includes creation of a Center for Sustainable Business that will support research, curriculum innovation and corporate outreach on sustainable business methods. Smeal will also participate in establishing a Center for Collaborative Research on Intelligent Natural Gas Supply Systems. This is a four-college collaboration with a focus on natural gas supply chains, with initial funding of $10 million from GE.

Smeal College has been – and will continue to be – unique in creating a fertile ground for research activities (centers, institutes, etc.) with different business designs, and pulling together resources from Smeal College, across Penn State campuses, and linked to faculty at other universities around the world. We will foster and support entrepreneurial activities from faculty members to identify new ways to create and disseminate new knowledge in business. This support includes encouraging the growth and impact of existing centers as well as focused efforts to launch new centers.

## Goal: Build our Culture

### ***Strategy 7. Promote Diversity:***

The very best business schools in the world have strong commitments to diversity. Diverse groups are more innovative, productive, and scholarly. Diversity is a priority of Penn State and the Smeal College. This priority is reflected in the strong group we have devoted to diversity enhancement, including an Assistant Dean for Diversity Enhancement who is supported by administrative staff and a diversity advisor. Our Diversity Enhancement Program has contributed to the development of a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity as status based on ethnic background, gender, socioeconomic status, first generation status, or sexual orientation, while recognizing that veterans, persons with disabilities and adult learner assist in making up the diverse community within the Smeal College. Diversity efforts are supported well, in large part from private and corporate philanthropy. Historically, underrepresented students were the sole focus of diversity efforts, with great emphasis on the undergraduate and MBA student populations. At Smeal, we will broaden our focus areas to create a more welcoming campus by better serving our change-of-location students from campuses and our increasing number of international undergraduates. Further, opportunities to support diversity efforts must also include increased efforts to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, doctoral students, staff, administration, advisory boards and alumni advisors. Diversity activities for all groups will be pursued along three dimensions: fostering awareness, through training and curriculum; outreach and support to diverse groups; and recruiting, admitting, hiring and retaining diverse groups.

### ***Strategy 8. Foster an Evolution of Honor and Integrity Awareness to Accountability to Advocacy:***

Doing business the right way has never been so important. As scrutiny of business has become ever more intense, in some cases through academic research, examples of cooked books, Ponzi schemes, backdated options, and off-the-books compensation have been discovered and vilified, thereby emphasizing the importance of doing business ethically. An emphasis on honor and integrity benefits all dimensions of our community and stakeholders. It allows our students, faculty and staff to be Penn State proud of their accomplishments. Honor and integrity are top priorities for Penn State and for Smeal.

Smeal has created a formal infrastructure, office, staff support, and Director for Honor and Integrity. In addition, by University policy there is a separate compliance infrastructure for Academic Integrity issues. To date, we have focused on academic integrity, and on MBA and undergraduate students. Yet Smeal’s honor and integrity initiative has been and will be much more—it is unique among our peers and a leader in Penn State’s efforts to build a culture of honor and integrity across the institution. With a refined role for the Honor and Integrity Director and a reconfigured Honor and Integrity Committee, there is a great opportunity to broaden the scope of honor and integrity at Smeal in curricular and co-curricular programming. Honor and Integrity will become an even greater differentiator for Smeal, an attractor for students, faculty, staff, donors, and corporate partners as we pursue a goal of fostering among Smeal stakeholders an evolution of honor and integrity awareness to accountability to advocacy. While our primary near-term focus is students, our goal is to see the same evolution across all Smeal constituents—staff, faculty, alumni. Moreover, while there is student awareness of the academic dimension of the honor code, there is an opportunity to develop awareness of the professional dimension, and establish a code of professional conduct for Smeal undergraduate students to parallel the existing Smeal MBA code of professional conduct.

### ***Strategy 9. Foster Sustainability:***

Sustainable business practice has become synonymous with successful business practice. Firms now routinely report on their sustainability efforts, and are judged by them. The Smeal College has been the leader among academic units at Penn State in developing, approving, and implementing a sustainability strategic plan in academic year 2012-2013. We will build on this early success to be a leader among the very best business schools in the area of sustainability through our teaching, research, outreach, and operations. We have identified a director of our sustainability effort, specified an initial budget, supported the hiring of staff support, and will seek the establishment of a Center for Sustainable Business. The Center’s mission is four-fold. Through our teaching, we will enhance the understanding of sustainable business practices and produce knowledgeable graduates prepared to apply these practices in the marketplace. Through our research, we will create knowledge relative to sustainable business practices and their impact on businesses and on society. Through our outreach, we will work with industry and government to collaboratively provide thought leadership in understanding and implementing sustainable business practices, and demonstrate within Smeal how these business practices can enable organizational success. In our operations, we are actively working to gain LEED-EB (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—Existing Building) certification, involving students in the selection of certification strategies. As certification approaches, we will communication our efforts broadly, and celebrate our successes as they come.

## Opportunities

Ideas for new initiatives not envisioned in this plan will undoubtedly arise. Pursuit of such ideas, even good ones, will divert us from achieving our vision and delivering on our mission if we become too opportunistic. Yet we wish to be flexible and to promote innovation, and new initiatives will be evaluated with this in mind. In judging an initiative, we will first ask whether it aligns naturally with the goals and strategies of this plan. The more challenging judgments will involve determining whether the initiative helps us achieve the vision, contributes significantly to the goals of our mission, and aligns with our strengths. Initiatives that help us provide an even more extraordinary education, produce new research with impact, or help further build our cultures will be most likely to be added to the plan. But differentiation or revenue production alone will not be enough: does it align with who we are, and does it help us be the best?

Similarly, entrepreneurial activities will be guided by a clear set of incentives that link revenue generation to support of key mission-related activities. While we will continue to find more traditional sources of funding for these activities, we will specify incentives that ensure that participating units benefit from entrepreneurial activities to fund their own research excellence initiatives: faculty lines, summer research, and doctoral stipends. For cross-department initiatives that are deemed to hold promise, we will identify champions from the faculty and staff to manage and promote development. We will also invest in existing core revenue generating activities to grow the revenue stream.

## Staging

Our student-focus initiatives will commence with the establishment of a curriculum review committee in academic year 2014-15, with action recommendations implemented in 2015-16 and assessed thereafter. Efforts in Diversity, Honor and Integrity, and Sustainability are already underway; the research initiative begins immediately, with faculty hiring to improve the research and teaching productivity with newly available resources. The online initiative will begin immediately, with course development during 2014-15 and initial delivery in 2015-16.

## Economics

Curriculum innovations might be accommodated with existing staff and faculty; if not, careful consideration must be given to which changes to undertake. The online initiative does require some up-front spending, but promises to generate positive net revenue within a few years. This can be accommodated through our own resources or with the help of World Campus. The larger resource issue is that we are currently underfunded relative to the best public business schools, and even relative to our own current enrollment. We can begin to address this issue with mission-aligned revenue-generating entrepreneurial activity. But it is an enrollment-driven issue; with resources more appropriate to our current enrollment, we can with existing facilities take the steps needed to achieve a vision of being among the best, and deliver a truly extraordinary education, laudable research with impact, and build a college culture of integrity, diversity, service, and sustainability.

## Achieving the Vision, and Distinction

If we act on all initiatives and have resources sufficient to take our scholarship to the next level, we will certainly be distinctive. With vision achieved, we will be known as one of the best. The best all deliver extraordinary educations and research with impact in vibrant scholarly communities. We will also be different, as several of our initiatives set us apart. Our decision to include career preparation in the mission is distinctive and different. It is important to current students, alumni, and recruiters, and we are among the very best at it. Smeal’s Honor and Integrity initiative rises above those of other schools we know to be among the best. As it matures, it will set us apart and will be and enable us to say that our students are prepared to succeed with integrity. Our sustainability initiative, by encompassing research, teaching, outreach, and operations, and carried out against the backdrop of excellence in sustainability across the campus, provides yet another differentiator for our college.

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## Relation to the University Strategic Plan

The Smeal College plan aligns well with the evolving Penn State University strategic plan. The goal of extraordinary education and the associated strategies contribute to the university’s themes involving resources, education, the digital future, and our cultures, and they promote the university initiatives of excellence, engagement, economic development and student career success, access and affordability, and technology and curriculum delivery. The research with impact goal and associated strategies contribute to the education theme and the student engagement initiative (though the student-focused elements of our research centers), as well as to the economic development and student career success initiative. Finally, our culture building goal and associated strategies contribute to the resources, education, and cultures themes as well as the excellence, student engagement, and diversity and demographics initiatives. A map associating Smeal goals and strategies to the university’s five themes and six initiatives is attached.