University Reinvention Initiative

Preface

The University Reinvention Initiative (URI) is an opportunity for the campus to come together to reimagine our university and live the Integrated Cluster vision. This process is primarily related to academic programs; however, academic programs are urged to consider their connections with the broader university community in order to support the holistic growth and development of our students, increase retention and graduation rates, and support post-graduation success. Participants are asked to think beyond the parameter of their traditional programs and explore opportunities for curricular integration and engagement within and across clusters and with the broader community.

Vision and Purpose

The purpose of URI is to transition Plymouth State University into a fully clustered institution that fulfills its mission statement, paraphrased here: to transform our students through a cluster-based learning model that produces with distinction, graduates able to deepen and advance knowledge and professional development, while connecting the campus with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment; especially in the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

The necessary transformation to align with our new Mission and Vision statements will not occur by sustaining current practices. Additionally, our current low retention and persistence rates, and high number of low enrolled courses are a significant threat to our financial sustainability and survival. As a tuition driven institution, we will not continue to survive if these numbers persist. The numbers also raise questions about our students' engagement in a holistic experience at PSU.

The response from prospective students, parents, and the broader community about the Integrated Cluster vision during orientations, open houses, and special events, and discussions with donors, alumni, and partners have been uniformly positive. We have been able to hold recruitment numbers steady despite the declining regional market. The early implementation of cluster projects, which connected students and external partners, demonstrates the need to further the University's vision.

The purpose of URI, therefore, is to move the success of the University forward into a sustainable future that benefits students and partners. With respect to faculty and academic staff, the purpose is to spawn innovative solutions by sharing data so as to embrace a shared-leadership model[1] of action. Rather than have the campus simply react to administrative

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[1] The President's University Blog. *The Move to Clusters – Shared Leadership*.
https://campus.plymouth.edu/president/the-move-to-cluster-shared-leadership/

recommendations, the purpose is to build the new University collectively with input from all areas of campus. Faculty are asked to use the provided data to review their relationship with their home cluster and consider programmatic changes to the status quo structure of degrees and the curriculum that shapes them.

Definition

"Program" is defined as a major and the options offered under the umbrella of major. As an example, the BS in Restaurants and Cuisine with Options in 1. Menu Planning, 2. Wine Pairing, and 3. Global Cuisine is defined as a single program, with major and options considered holistically.

As programs and curriculum changes are considered, minors and certificate programs may also be impacted and would need correlating changes.

Goal

The goals of the University Reinvention Initiative are to:

- Attract and retain students, with a focus on encouraging persistence-to-graduation through curricular reform. Achieve 80% retention and 65% graduation rates through more closely interwoven academic programs, support programs, co-curricular programs, and residential life programs that holistically support and engage our students. Annual targets were identified in the President's top-10 priorities outlined at the last Town Hall meeting. An annual increase of 5% for retention and 3% for the 4-year graduation rate are goals until the target rates are achieved.
- Optimize programs by considering opportunities for growth and development using approaches that include sharing of courses, refining curriculum, combining existing programs and multiple options in synergistic ways, and investing in dynamic new programs.
- Continue to engage in General Education Connections and Directions course development, including developing pathways and themes, while reinventing First Year Seminars and INCOs.
- Create more innovative courses, including developing strands, that may serve multiple disciplines and multiple clusters.
- Examine courses and curriculum for courses to be discontinued.
- Facilitate development of Cluster, discipline, and program synergies. This means that Clusters will have considered how their programs fit together and are aligned with the University, Cluster theme, and vision as part of this review process and development of action plans.
- Facilitate annual program review, goal setting, planning, and continuous improvement/development for all programs.
- Result in contributing to the economic sustainability of the University with a net revenue increase of $2 million dollars.

To achieve these goals all programs should:

- Align with student interest and market demand. Indications should include an upward or sustained strong enrollment trend and anticipated workforce demand or clear evidence that this can be the case.
- Align with the PSU Mission Statement and campus Vision for Integrated Clusters. This includes enabling students to have multiple disciplinary perspectives and opportunities of collaboration while pursuing their selected degree(s)
- While discipline majors will continue, Clusters with discipline families will identify opportunities for curriculum sharing; connected and engaging introductory courses and course strands; program revisions and recombination; investment in new programs; pathways from Undergraduate to Graduate programs; and program discontinuation.
- Reduce the percentage of low enrolled upper-division courses for Undergraduate programs and the percentage of low enrolled courses at the Graduate level
- Contribute to the increase of student success exhibited through retention, persistence, graduation, and post-graduate success
- Provide innovative and progressive teaching and learning experiences that align with the PSU and Cluster promise
- Consider opportunities to integrate academic programs and co-curricular programming that facilitates collaboration while addressing holistic needs of students

Undergraduate programs should:

- Provide at least one course or one section in the General Education Foundations or Directions program incorporating the themed General Education approach
- Develop at least one course in partnership with other programs for themed General Education
- Offer at least one theme-based First Year Seminar that correlates to themes and issues connecting the program and the Cluster(s)

What kinds of innovations and Cluster strategies might you to be consider–knowing that many of these strategies do not yet exist–for cost containment, reinvention, and high engagement?

- 4+1/3+2 programs
- Cluster Majors[2]
- Consider options for integrated majors in addition to existing discipline-based majors
- Program combination (and possible renaming)
- Program closure
- Shared key courses
- New Programs
- Entry/Introductory cluster course sequences
- Themed Gen Ed cluster courses

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[2] The President's University Blog. The Move to Clusters – Some Ideas on Structure and Evolution (Part 2). https://campus.plymouth.edu/president/the-move-to-cluster-some-ideas-on-structure-and-evolution-part-2/

- More efficient organizational structures to support Clusters and programs
- Resource reallocation
- Financial partnerships
- Broadening collaborations between clusters and majors to address real world challenges integrated into courses, curriculum, projects, and research

Roles and Responsibilities

Each program and cluster is unique. Each cluster is in different stages of leadership development. Current department chairs and program coordinators have the discipline, program, and accreditation expertise that is essential to understanding program-specific curriculum and standards. Cluster faculty, staff, department chairs, program coordinators, and cluster leaders collaboratively provide the knowledge, expertise, and innovation to envision connections and relationships to spark inter-connected transformation.

Targets

Financial: Currently the Academic Affairs program budgets are at about a $1.4 million deficit. We need to address this through program innovation that attracts, maintains, and graduates sufficient students to eliminate this deficit. While Clusters will identify programs for retirement and opportunities for cost savings (such as reducing low enrolled courses), the emphasis of URI is broader in scope than cost containment—it's on curriculum reinvention that will support revenue increases. *A net increase of $2 million dollars, combined revenue increase and direct program cost reductions, represents our financial target.*

Retention of 80% and Graduation Rates of 65%: These targets are closely linked with our financial goals but more importantly they are linked with student well-being and success. Retention has significant implications not only for the financial welfare of the University but for the well-being of our students. *30% of our first-year students do not currently return to the institution and half of those not returning do not go on to other institutions of higher education. Approximately 50% of our first-year students do not graduate.* These students have made a significant financial, time, and emotional investment that will not result in an earned degree. This situation compromises their future well-being. From a financial perspective, *increasing student retention to 80% and raising graduation rates to 65% would represent an increase in revenue of $4-6 million per year.*

Cluster Synergies: This means that Clusters have considered how their programs fit together and are aligned with the University, Cluster theme, and vision. Clusters will identify opportunities for curriculum sharing; connected and engaging introductory courses and course strands; program revisions and recombination, and pathways from Undergraduate to Graduate programs.

Incorporating URSA Findings

The campus underwent a thorough review of programs two years ago during the URSA process. This process required programs to consider programs' levels of development; future trending;

measures of quality; adequacy of University resourcing; recruitment, retention, and graduation rates; areas of program distinction; revenue and costs, and future program opportunities. We recommend that Clusters review program URSA reports as well as the comprehensive credit bearing report that provides specific recommendations regarding opportunities to develop more cohesion among programs, and recommendations for program discontinuation, revision, and additional resourcing. A key URI emphasis is on how programs will contribute to the PSU vision and Integrated Clusters.

Increasing Revenues and Reducing Direct Costs

Several ways to reduce direct costs include decreasing low enrolled courses usually associated with upper-level courses in low enrolled programs, considering when curriculum can be shared across programs, and applying pedagogical strategies that support larger classes. Even increases of 2-4 students can make a tremendous difference in the amount of instructional sections needed. More efficient use of existing classroom space will further reduce the pressure to develop added classroom spaces on campus.

Decreasing low enrolled programs will free up faculty resources from teaching low enrolled upper-level classes and allow us to re-deploy these faculty resources for general education aligned with the discipline, to create entry level courses designed to create interest in the major when market data supports potential external interest, or to develop cluster-based courses.

Increased revenues will be associated with programs that are aligned with market demand and meet University student success markers (retention, graduation, and post-graduate success) that will make PSU a school of choice. Revenue increases may also align with thoughtful investment in new programs based on demand analysis and career/research developments. Decreased costs and increased revenue can also result from innovative cluster programs or recombination of existing programs that are more directly aligned with market interests.

We recognize that bringing the Academic Affairs budget into balance is a problem to be solved collaboratively. We all need to be good stewards of the University and to consider programs not from the perspective of personal affiliation, but from the perspective of current and future market demand, cluster alignment, innovation, and sustainability. We have faith in our collective innovation and creativity and we know that a lack of concerted effort to increase revenues and/or reduce direct costs will be catastrophic for PSU.

We are asking that Clusters review their programs with an eye towards innovative programming that meets current market needs, consideration for the fiscal viability of the University (our current level of Academic Affairs finances is unsustainable), and respect for the expertise of the faculty within the disciplines.

Timeline and Process

The University Reinvention Initiative will involve a two-part process. While recognizing that many programs have multiple discipline and cross-cluster curriculum components, the focus of Part 1 is on synergistic Cluster and program re-invention and refinement. Clusters with the respective programs are asked to have initial reviews and strategies developed by **March 30, 2018**. Part 2 will focus on refining action steps such as developing curricular proposals for the accepted program/curricular changes, and identifying additional cross-cluster and cross university opportunities during the late spring and summer 2018.

Part 1 involves Clusters developing a 1-2 page review of each program within the Cluster and an overall Cluster report of 4-5 pages that describes how the programs fit together; what strategies the cluster is employing to increase student recruitment and retention; shared curriculum and identified cluster courses or programs, and identified action strategies with specific actionable targets and timeline. *Templates will be provided for Clusters and for programs.*

Combing programs need only complete a report on the new program using the *program report template provided*. Retiring programs do not need to provide a program report, but can be listed in the Cluster report. The expectation is that Clusters will work with those serving in administrative roles throughout this process to collectively identify opportunities for curriculum innovations. The Academic Deans, Financial Affairs, and Enrollment Management will work collaboratively with Clusters as they go through this process. The Deans will work with faculty to provide ongoing iterative feedback as needed and will be available to assist throughout the review time frame.

We will re-run the *Collaborative Leadership Institute* (January 22-25) with a focus on supporting meeting design specifically around URI. Clusters will identify leaders that have not previously participated. If Clusters identify additional supports needed to do this work, the Deans will work with you to accommodate these needs.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with the faculty throughout this process. Our expectation is that collectively we work to develop Cluster program and course portfolios and needed action steps to meet our enrollment, retention, graduation, and financial targets. *Timeline for Part 1 reviews is March 30, 2018. Part 1 reviews will be submitted to the Deans.*

Part 2 of the process will involve the cross-cluster representatives, Cluster and program leaders, faculty, and staff with the next phase of planning: refining reviews to prioritize action steps, develop accepted curricular initiatives and proposals, and to identify additional cross-cluster and co-curricular opportunities. This will happen during the late spring and summer semesters. Members of the administration will continue to work collaboratively with Clusters as they go through this phase of the process. A planning template will be provided.

In order to meet the next recruitment cycle for Fall 2019, curricular proposals that are scheduled to be implemented by Fall 2019 or earlier need to be approved by Curriculum Committee no

later than September 2018. Summer stipends will be made available for clusters to accomplish this work.

Decisions will be made along the way based on plans and action steps developed by Clusters and programs within the Clusters.

The President has charged the Deans with the accountability to ensure that the review process results in action steps that support the goals outlined in this document. The success of this process will require full collaboration between Faculty, Staff, and Administration.

Curriculum proposals can start being developed at any time and will continue based on program/cluster timelines, planning, and decision making. All of us are invested in the success of our students and the University and it will take us all working together to succeed!

Data to be Considered

- Program financial analysis
- URSA program and University level reports
- Multi-year information on UG enrollment, retention and graduation
- Multi-year Grad matriculation numbers and course registrations
- Grad financial data (needs some revision)
- Market data and resources (Market analysis—occupational projections by state, region, and country)
- Grant revenue data
- Course Data
    - Current PSU average class sizes, undergraduate and graduate; targets for financially sustainable average course enrollment
    - Low enrolled course data
    - High Drop, Failure, and Withdrawal rates