

ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN – SUNY BROCKPORT

PART 2: GRADUATE RECOMMENDATIONS

Office of the Provost, April 20, 2022

- A. **INTRODUCTION:** This graduate and second part of the academic strategic plan report for SUNY Brockport represents the latest work of the Academic Strategic Planning (ASP) Committee. Again, many contributions have been made when time and energy were limited. The first report concentrated on undergraduate programs while this second report focuses on graduate programs. SUNY Brockport is fortunate to have extremely accurate data about its students and their enrollment patterns which informs the work of individual colleagues and committees across campus.

B. **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

This situational analysis will repeat only *some* of the material in Part I of the report on undergraduate programs for institutional context. SUNY Brockport is part of the State University New York higher education system that involves 64 campuses in bureaucratic processes and with unionized personnel. This College, SUNY Brockport, is one of the 13 “comprehensive” institutions that are limited to offering only the bachelor and master’s degree level of instruction. Brockport is the comprehensive college exception with one clinical doctorate (Doctor of Nursing Practice - DNP) that began last year. Institutional enrollment is around 7,000 students and with an annual state funded budget of around \$68,000,000 (2020-2021 year). The Academic Affairs Division is composed of about 680 faculty and staff, with 87% of tenure-track faculty holding terminal degrees. The Division consumes about 68% (estimated at \$38,000,000) of the institution’s annual State budget which is why cost containment within the division is central to the institution’s stability. Slightly more than \$4.1million of external funds by faculty were received during the 2020-2021 year. Most recently, SUNY Brockport placed 73 out of 126 ranked institutions by US News and World report as a northern regional university.

Total graduate enrollment (Attachment A) overall has increased by 10% over the past five years, increasing by 30.6% mainly in the School of Education and Health and Human Services while declining in the School of Arts and Sciences by 21.5 %, and declining in the School of Business and Management by 17.3%. While the percentage of graduate students at SUNY Brockport remains relatively small (18-20%) as part of the institution’s overall enrollment, the graduate tuition revenue per student is higher. When reading Attachment A, please use caution when considering program enrollment trends as changes in small numbers generate large percentage shifts that still may only reflect a few students in a particular program. The following data points help define the composition of enrolled graduate students at SUNY Brockport:

1. During the past five years, the proportion of female graduate students has increased by almost 13% of they now comprise about 68% of enrolled graduate students. Overall, the age distribution among graduate students has remained fairly stable with about 64% being

classified as adults (older than 25 years of age) and with part-time graduate students usually somewhat older than full-time graduate students.

2. There is a positive graduate student retention trend. While total graduate spring enrollment declined this past year-over-year, during the previous five years (2017 to 2022), the percentage of returning graduate students increased by 15.6%.
3. While it is difficult to determine the number of adults who began graduate study and have not completed degree requirements, we do know that there are over 1.5 million such undergraduate students within the State of New York. While it is unlikely that a similar number of “unfinished” potential graduate students now live in the State, the use of online programs as a routine means of securing education is now widely accepted. And, SUNY Brockport has the largest number of online graduate programs (21 programs today with another in progress) among the SUNY comprehensives. Such programs are available to prospective students anywhere and concentrated efforts for their promotion are an essential part of strategic graduate program planning.
4. The drive among working adults for micro-credentials mainly for career advancement can readily become part of Brockport’s graduate level portfolio if resources are directed to that target market as well – realizing that the price competition from corporate providers will be quite difficult to counteract.
5. Half of SUNY Brockport’s graduate students reside in Monroe County alone. About 20 enrolled graduate students reside outside of the State of New York with only three enrolled from as international students. Whether the SUNY system has an online international student recruitment strategy is not apparent, yet this market segment may be quite lucrative given the stellar reputation of the SUNY system. And, with so many graduate programs available online (21) this could become a growing market segment for Brockport.

This is a difficult, complex, and challenging situational environment for SUNY Brockport as well as other institutions of higher education – an almost perfect storm -- of demographic, cultural, and technology shifts with social and public health changes that affect one’s perceived value of their time and energy. Also importantly at this time, the divergent views regarding campus speakers now represents the national polarization that is also apparent. Whether or not such speakers affect enrollment trends is debatable yet the reactive responses by some external people are cause for concern which may be mitigated by time.

Creative courage and resilience are necessary to weather this storm. Here at SUNY Brockport, the design and development of an academic strategic plan is only the first step into this dramatically different reality which will require continuous academic program renewal, integrated with the routine SUNY PPR requirements, and incorporation between program development and fiscal resources that help secure the future. Our future is determined by what we do internally as well as increasingly affected by what happens externally in arenas beyond our institutional borders.

It may be fruitful for SUNY Brockport to consider designing a *comprehensive* strategy for the recruitment of graduate students. There are several related parts to such an endeavor, for example: staff personnel for summer recruitment operations including communication with prospects, continuous review of program applications, timely admission decisions, and the availability of academic advising for continuing graduate students. There are a number of graduate programs which have more qualified applicants for which we lack resources including, in some cases, physical space needs. The ASP Committee and I have worked diligently to assure that such programs and their potential resource needs clearly are known.

The main issue now facing SUNY Brockport is to identify and build academic programs that attract qualified graduate students who are retained through degree completion. It is of critical importance that faculty lines be routinely re-allocated into academic programs for enrollment growth, fiscal stewardship, and institutional stability. The academic program reviews discussed below are important initial work that can provide the foundation for stability at the institution's center – the division of academic affairs and particular, in graduate programs. This review has been an open invitation for SUNY Brockport to reimagine its way forward with programs that that will help renew enrollment and stabilize academic affairs and thus the institution as a whole.

SUNY BROCKPORT PROGRAM REVIEWS:

The initial impetus for academic program reviews at SUNY Brockport began with SUNY mandated program reviews and later, during the tenure of Provost Dr. Mary Ellen Zuckerman who constituted a committee in 2015 to commence program reviews for the purpose of assisting with resource allocations. After her tenure, this work was again undertaken while Dr. Katy Heyning served as Provost and with the establishment of an Academic Master Plan Committee in 2018 at the President Macpherson's request. During these intervening years, templates were designed, piloted, and reviewed by the involved faculty with three different provosts. With my arrival as Interim Provost in June of 2021, much initial work had already been accomplished, especially for undergraduate programs. Nonetheless, there was the need to establish a timetable for program review completions and bring this long process to fruition with the definition of growth areas and commensurate resources at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Thus, in August of 2021, I changed the emphasis from “academic master planning” to “academic strategic planning” with the older Academic Steering Committee renamed as the Academic Strategic Planning (ASP) Committee. I subsequently published a schedule for the completion of the undergraduate and graduate program reviews begun years earlier. The initial work of the ASP involved the classification of academic programs into one of four categories (described below) with the proposed timetable providing multiple opportunities for involvement and review of work by the relevant parties in academic affairs. Opportunities were provided for the College Senate, Department Chairs and the faculty, and Deans to give their recommendations with their own commentary on program classifications to the provost.

Two cautionary notes are necessary when examining data for graduate programs. First, large percentage changes may indicate little of consequence since small numbers exaggerate gains, i.e., moving from 2 to 4 majors over five years reflects a 100% gain yet the number of enrolled students remains very few. Second, overall institutional enrollment has declined during the preceding six years with the exception being graduate enrollment which has increased by 14.5% with most of that gain from part-time graduate students. Even with this increase, graduate enrollment only constitutes (2021-22 year) around 20% of overall institutional enrollment. One obvious enrollment challenge facing SUNY Brockport is if adequate graduate enrollment growth will offset the traditional-aged undergraduate enrollment decline that most likely will occur in the near future.

The Academic Strategic Planning (ASP) Committee consisted of twelve voting members: (Dr. Monica Brasted, Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences; Dr. Eileen Daniel, Vice Provost; Mrs. Frances Dearing, Director of Assessment; Dr. Linda Delene, Interim Provost and VPAA; Dr. Michael Harrison, Director of the Center for Graduate Studies; Dr. Lerong He, Associate Dean of the School of Business Administration; Dr. Alisa James, Associate Dean of the School of Education and Health and Human Services; Dr. Jeffrey Lashbrook, Sociology; Dr. Kathleen Peterson, Director of Nursing; Dr. Darson Rhodes, Public Health; and

Mr. Brad Schreiber, Advancement). The Committee was well served with the ex-officio addition of Dr. Crystal Hallenbeck and Ms. Rachel Killion from the Budget office -- both of whom provided valuable data and explanations of Brockport's budget over time. This ASP Committee met throughout the fall semester and into the Spring semester, discussing and advising me about academic programs at SUNY Brockport. And finally, this ASP Committee met on Friday, March 11, 2022 and made its final recommendations for graduate programs at SUNY Brockport. Attachment C represents the various levels of the graduate review process and the respective program classifications with comments for each review stage.

Before reading the summary of recommendations made at various stages and outlined in Attachment C, it may be helpful to review the four categories into which programs have been classified. This classification stems from a 2x2 matrix decision tool that is often used when data are a blend of quantitative and qualitative information, and when constraints confine alternative actions. The four categories and their definitions used during this process were as follows, and with the related factors outlined (pp. 1-2 above), were considered by those deeply involved in this work.

- A. **GROWTH**: there is substantial student demand and interest in the program from the number of qualified individuals who seek program entry; and/or by external partners who seek to hire the program's graduates. Usually, growth programs require additional resources to support program expansion and such resources must be offset by expected enrollment revenue. This balancing of student demand and program costs is usually fraught with difficulty since demand may be cyclical and costs may not be able to be forecasted accurately due to uncontrollable variables.
- B. **AUGMENTATION**: this is a program where faculty, facility, or other material resources are needed to respond to unmet or expected demand for program graduates. Often such programs will have an expected growth pattern (for example, licensure changes, certification requirements, emerging national consciousness about needed programs, technology developments) that can, with some certitude, be forecasted. One key question is whether the demand will be adequate to cover the costs necessary to upgrade or strengthen the program – and over what time period.
- C. **RECONFIGURATION**: in this category, academic programs could examine their entry requirements; their proliferation or scarcity of elective courses; course sequencing; the associated titles of courses and course material for the mid-21st century; and shifting relationships with other disciplines and external social change, for example, the proliferation of social media and data analytics into every aspect of life. It is clear that some departments have seriously reviewed their programs from SUNY PPR recommendations while others, from earlier and repetitive PPR's, have not capitalized upon improvement suggestions. A curricular program must be accurate, timely, and identify knowledge paths for student success as a consequence of student investment of their time, money, and energy.
- D. **DISCONTINUATION**: there is insufficient demand and student interest in the program (despite its quality or depth) to continue to offer the program, especially with low and/or declining student enrollment for years and scarce resources. This is a painful category for everyone and particularly for those who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of knowledge in the discipline or area involved. Of course, academic programs will be continued until students currently enrolled have finished their degree requirements. Tenured faculty will retain their positions although perhaps with different tasks.

In making my recommendations to the President, I have carefully considered the ASP Committee's views and their comments and recommendations. I agree with the ASP Committee recommendations and in a

few cases, have added my own comments for consideration. The chart in Attachment D represents a summary of programs classified within each School -- knowing that enrollment data over several years as well as departmental comments support almost all the final program classification recommendations.

Below is a summary of program “growth” classifications along with a preliminary indication of an implementation cycle.

A. Graduate Programs – Growth Classification

School of Health, Education, Human Svc.	Implementation Cycle		Provost Comments
School Health Ed. (SHE)	3.		
Counselor Ed: Counseling: School and College	4.		Applicants waiting for admission
Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)	1.		Applicants waiting for admission with space and faculty additions
Social Work	5.		Should be potential growth here
TESOL (Teaching English as Second Language)	2.		Applicants waiting for admission

This second table indicates those programs recommended in the “augmentation” category with a suggested implementation cycle:

B. Graduate Programs – Augmentation Classification

School of Arts and Sciences:	Implementation Cycle		Provost Comments
Environmental Science and Ecology	3.		Fits with College Strategic Plan and has strong growth potential
School of Health, Education, Human Svc.			
Adolescent Education	4.		Needs Advising Help
Master’s, Public Health	1.		Growth Potential High
MSAT (Physical Educ)	2.		Growth Potential High

The five programs in the “growth” category and the four programs in the “augmentation” category have the potential of adding significant graduate students annually in programs at SUNY Brockport. The investment in both faculty positions and staff positions for the growth category programs is an investment in future growth. If the enrollment projections are met, the direct costs should readily be recovered.

Similar results could occur for those graduate programs in the augmentation category. It is possible to scale the needed investment over two or three years. The continued underfunding of necessary resources will curtail potential growth.

The next task is to formulate a resource timetable, including both faculty and staff positions, facility changes, and physical material necessary to support growth programs. Priorities are essential for position allocations among the schools as well as program feedback to colleagues throughout academic affairs. This establishment of annual priorities recognizes that everything cannot be accomplished simultaneously yet planning must continue to move programs into gradual implementation. The resource reports necessary for programs classified the “growth” and augmentation categories will be completed in May and then provided to the President.

This is an exciting even though difficult time for SUNY Brockport. It has taken a thorough and careful look at its academic programs with multiple review stages that have clarified many issues throughout academic affairs. This report and the attendant work by many throughout the College represents a positive initiative undertaken to make decisions about future growth and enrollment prospects. Thus, the many, many individuals who worked on this initiative have positioned SUNY Brockport in a positive situation which reflects its vitality and energy even while facing an uncertain future. Although it may take three to four years for additional results to become apparent and stabilize enrollment, this comprehensive academic program review has been the necessary first step in facing the future together.

Linda M. Delene, Ph.D., Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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