

OAA Strategic Plan Phase II Objectives Survey Analysis - Summary and Emergent Themes - May 1, 2023

Introduction

Following the OAA Strategic Planning Phase II webinar hosted by Provost Gonyea on April 10, 2023, the office of the provost distributed the Strategic Objectives survey to members of the Academic Affairs community via email. The survey was designed to collect input on strategic objectives aligned with the strategic priorities and supporting themes identified in [phase one of Empire State University's 2022-23 strategic planning process](#). The survey asked community members to identify up to three division specific strategic objectives for each strategic priority area. A total of 213 suggested objectives were received. They were distributed across each strategic priority area as follows: *Student Success* (n=57), *Academic and Inclusive Excellence* (n=56), *Organizational Effectiveness* (n=58), and *Raising Our Public Profile* (n=42).

Survey Analysis

Two members of the committee worked independently to read and evaluate each response. Reviewers were looking for alignment to elements of a given strategic priority and supporting themes. The reviewers identified a coding schema grounded in the Empire State University Elevate '28 Strategic Plan Framework; then independently reviewed responses again and assigned one or more thematic codes that best characterized the response, or elements of a response. After the first pass of coding, the reviewers met to reach collaborative consensus. Coding for each priority area was summarized based on frequency to support ease of identification of recurrent themes.

Findings

Reviewers observed that most responses were tactically oriented, meaning that they identified initiatives that the institution or division may take to achieve a given strategic objective. For example, the following responses were associated with the "Student Success" priority: 1) *incorporating tutoring within the Brightspace platform for easy student access* and 2) *create and fund more experiences outside the classroom for informal active learning*. Each example describes steps or tactics that might support one or more broader strategic objectives concerning student supports and the student experience. Tactically oriented responses were identified as such in the analysis data set for future reference, but they were also assigned thematic codes to support the committee's work in the initial drafting of strategic objectives.

The top three most frequently appearing codes/themes identified for each strategic priority are presented below, along with representative examples for each code.

Priority: Student Success

- Student Experience (35.6%) --The overall standard of academic programs, mentoring, and support services.
 - *Improve the student experience*
 - *Find ways to humanize the student experience*
 - *The student experiences the university in terms of their own needs and not in terms of the colleges organizational structure and departmental silos.*
- Retention and Degree Completion (20.7%) -- The rate that students continue to enroll in courses and graduate from the university.
 - *Increase graduation rates*
 - *Increase retention rates*

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- *Shorten time to degree*
- Connections (14.9%) -- Improving the frequency and quality of student connection to one another, alumni, and with the institution itself.
 - *Increase student-to-student connections*
 - *Increase student-to-alumni connections*
 - *Improve orientation so student have a better understanding of the University and resources available*

Priority: Academic and Inclusive Excellence

- Recruitment and Retention – Diverse Population (38.2%) -- Improving outcomes for diverse student body and increasing the number of new and continuing diverse students.
 - *Close the equity gap in graduation rates between white students and students of color.*
 - *Ensure that the faculty of each of the schools is diverse and inclusive.*
 - *Equip instructors and faculty with inclusive teaching skills (e.g., social justice pedagogy) to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in their curriculum, scholarship and service.*
- Programming and Curriculum (23.6%) -- Improving academic programs and co-curricular activities.
 - *Thoughtful and targeted program development and evaluation*
 - *Consistently fresh, innovative course content*
 - *Develop new programs based on the future needs of the workforce of New York State.*
- Assessment (18%) --Measuring the quality of curriculum, instruction, and student learning.
 - *Ensure that all courses in all modes have the same level of excellence.*
 - *Begin to model out current high-quality academic programs to other lesser-performing programs*
 - *Build culture of assessment at the institution*

Priority: Organizational Effectiveness

- Staffing/Roles/Workforce Development (27.3%) -- Improving or realigning faculty/staff roles, training, or incentives
 - *Definition and equitable distribution of support staff responsibility*
 - *Enhance opportunities and incentives for faculty engagement in scholarship.*
 - *Concretize stakeholder engagement with DEI in annual review process*
- Process Improvement (15.9%) -- Improving or streamlining practices and procedures.
 - *Leverage technology to free up our most important asset, people (automation does not mean jobs will go away)*
 - *Streamline processes for all aspects of the operations and programs of the university.*
 - *Streamlined hiring process for adjuncts each term*
- Workplace Climate (11.4%) --Improving culture or climate.
 - *Focus on RETAINING talented and capable people in key positions*
 - *create a climate of inclusivity and respect*
 - *Encourage innovation by creating a culture that supports experimentation and risk-taking. Romantic notions of SUNY Empire are oppressive and unrealistic.*

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Priority: Raising Our Public Profile

- Community Engagement (31.3%) --Leveraging our expertise to connect with communities throughout the state through programming or research.
 - *Participate in community events, especially those with media coverage*
 - *Promote public engagement of the university in issues relevant to NYS communities. This can be through research, technical assistance, forum organizing.*
 - *Identify communities and leaders in those communities to promote particular degree programs/disciplines that are needed for workforce development.*
- Academic Programming and Partnerships (23.8%) --Increasing cooperation with partners through recruitment and program development.
 - *Cultivate reciprocal relationships with industry partners and deliver high-quality programs aligned to regional needs.*
 - *Create internship programs in state companies (for school credit)*
 - *Serve as the degree completion arm for students who have stopped out of other 4-year SUNY institutions.*
- Research & Scholarship & Creative Activity (19.4%) -- Using faculty and student research, scholarship, and creative activity to raise the college's public profile.
 - *Encouraging employees to participate in significant research and publish and present it in national- and world-class venues*
 - *Creating a balanced workload that includes ample time for faculty scholarship*
 - *To create a consistent access point for faculty to share their and their students' work, including visual images, for internal and external posting*
- Recognition (19.4%) -- Increasing reputation across the state and beyond for the quality of our academic programs and our distinction as a leader in online teaching and learning, individualized instruction, and prior learning assessment.
 - *Identify strong leadership in our alumni that have made important contributions in their communities, workplace, etc., and build upon that to raise the profile of the university more broadly.*
 - *Focus on the kind of individual attention that an institution-of-mentoring can offer; students can become the agents of their own learning*
 - *Increase local awareness (we should not be seen as a Saratoga institution)*

Next Steps

The Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) Strategic Planning Committee's role is to solicit input from the OAA community on the objectives and goals Academic Affairs should set in alignment with the University's Elevate '28 strategic priorities and draft potential objectives and goals for community input and Provost Council review. Review and analysis of the Strategic Objectives Survey constitutes the first step in an iterative objective and S.M.A.R.T goal drafting process. Moving forward, our process will feature multiple opportunities for community feedback and input into shaping the final draft while ensuring alignment to the university's [strategic priorities, mission, vision, values](#), and the [DEI action plan](#).