

Senate Subcommittee on the Strategic Plan

Members: Duane Moser, Jim Munz, Rob Whittemore, Marie Wright

Summary Remarks

The revised Strategic Plan incorporates changes suggested during the March 17, 2004 Senate meeting, and it includes feedback received from a number of faculty following that meeting. It was our objective that the Strategic Plan reflect the degree to which WCSU continues to serve “as an accessible, responsive and creative intellectual resource for the people and institutions of Connecticut”; however, even with our suggestions, we recognize that questions and inconsistencies remain. We have made our best attempt to improve upon what has seemed, in its scope, to be hastily prepared and not sufficiently ambitious to convey the record and potential of WCSU.

Overall, it is difficult to match the goals/objectives in the Strategic Plan as it currently stands with the principles in the University Mission Statement. During the March 17, 2004 Senate meeting, the student members of the Roger Sherman Debate Society suggested that the “principles and values” of the Strategic Plan be used to establish our long-range objectives and to provide grounds for assessing the degree to which we live up to those objectives. They proposed that the “Goals and Objectives” of the Strategic Plan (page 15) be revised to read:

1. Student achievement and participation levels
2. Faculty sufficiency
3. Curricular or program goals
4. Academic environment and culture
5. Community partnership and identity

These goals and objectives are framed to accommodate both planning and assessment purposes, and are drawn directly from the principles of our Mission Statement.

As members of an ad hoc committee of the Senate, we felt it was not appropriate for us to completely revise the Strategic Plan utilizing this framework; however, we strongly suggest that the next version of the Strategic Plan incorporate these goals and objectives.

The current Strategic Plan is long on objectives but short on strategies for achieving these objectives. Some examples:

a) Goal/objective #1 (page 15): Enhance or Develop Programs that Support WCSU’s Excellence and Distinctiveness.

Throughout the Strategic Plan, emphasis is placed upon applied areas of focus (e.g., Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership, MFA in Writing, Gerontology, Alternative Health Education). Emphasis also is placed upon graduate and certificate programs without corresponding attention to undergraduate needs. Why are there no references to furthering and fostering the interdisciplinary programs that have already been adopted by the university, and which are consistent with WCSU’s academic goals and objectives (e.g., the Urban Studies minor, the

Environmental Studies initiative, the Information Systems Security program, and the Cultural Resource Management program)?

b) Goal/objective #2 (page 15): Promote Culture of Life Long Learning Among All Constituencies.

Item #2B on page 16 states, "Expand non-credit programs and certificates for people in the community." While this may be a laudable goal, we are curious why, after years of emphasizing assessment as a cornerstone to program development system-wide, such non-credit offerings are under no obligation or requirement to provide assessment guarantees.

c) Goal/objective #5 (page 15): Increase academic standards.

Pages 18 and 19 of the Strategic Plan deal with increasing academic student success for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 academic years, respectively. (We were curious as to why the 2003-2004 academic year was included in the Strategic Plan dated 2004-2006.) There is no clearly delineated strategy which allows us to simultaneously achieve both an increase in academic standards and an increase in academic student success. Do we intend to measurably increase remedial programs in order to achieve these goals? Do we intend to increase admission standards? What is the strategy that is being suggested?

d) Undergraduate: Professional Programs Matrix (page 10).

"Versatility in course offering" is identified as a weakness of the Business program, and the "Need (for) more interdisciplinary programs" is identified as a weakness of Education and Human Services programs. (We are unsure as to what constitutes a Human Services program.) What is the strategy for overcoming these perceived weaknesses? How should resources be allocated in order to enhance the number and variety of course offerings?

We feel that the Strategic Plan should be more than a pro forma document written to satisfy State statutes.

We suggest that future iterations of the Strategic Plan include strategies for achieving stated objectives set out by the plan. Without clear strategies, resources cannot be meaningfully allocated.