Mission and Institutional Goals

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

1.1 Introduction

A visitor to the SUNY Plattsburgh main Web site might be immediately drawn to the link, “Message from the President.” From here the college’s Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Pledge are easy to access. By locating these main guiding principles on the President’s site, we make a statement to students, as well as to staff, faculty, and the general public, about the high priority our institution assigns to these key documents (Message from President Ettling).

SUNY Plattsburgh revised our Mission Statement in 2009-10 to capture more explicitly the ideals of our campus community. The revised Mission Statement, Vision, and Pledge were vetted and approved by various college constituents including strategic planning committees, Faculty Senate, Deans’ Cabinet, and President’s Cabinet.

1.2 Mission Statement

The State University of New York College at Plattsburgh prepares a diverse population of undergraduate and graduate students for a wide range of professional pursuits, responsible citizenship, and ethical life based on a strong foundation in the liberal arts. The college is a selective public institution offering an affordable yet high-quality education.

SUNY Plattsburgh supports students in the discovery and cultivation of collaborative leadership in their chosen careers and communities. We challenge students to think, learn, and excel through close interactions with an outstanding faculty and staff and participation in rewarding experiential learning opportunities. We are committed to academic excellence, ethical values and practice, lifelong learning, and responsible citizenship in a sustainable global community.

SUNY Plattsburgh contributes to the cultural enrichment and economic development of the northeastern New York region. Academic programs, recreational activities, and community involvement and services embrace our distinctive location—near Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Mountains, and Canada.

1.3 Vision Statement

We will be the public comprehensive college of choice by transforming lives through teaching, learning, research, and service.

1.4 Pledge

- You will be welcomed and supported by faculty, friends, staff, and our community.
- You will be challenged to learn, think, and excel through close interactions with an outstanding faculty and staff.
- You will be taught by committed and respectful faculty members.
- You will experience a diversity of cultures and perspectives.
- You will discover and develop your personal potential.

These statements and pledge provide the framework for everything we do as an institution. In addition to stating who we are—“a selective public institution offering a high-quality and affordable education”—and what we do—“prepare a diverse population of undergraduate and graduate students for a wide range of careers based on a strong foundation in the liberal arts”—the mission statement also articulates our commitment to the development of experientially and ethically informed leaders and citizens in the global community. Moreover, our Mission Statement showcases SUNY Plattsburgh’s place and relationship to our immediate surroundings—Northeastern New York with Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Mountains, and Canada nearby. These values, goals, and location define us as a unique and valuable part of the State University of New York.

1.5 Institutional Goals

At the beginning of the last strategic planning cycle (2007) five strategic themes were identified as guides to planning and resource allocation. Though these themes of the Strategic Plan were not originally intended to be SUNY Plattsburgh’s institutional goals, recently it has become apparent that they are serving as such. In November 2010, after consultation between the college administration and the college’s key constituent leaders, the following five strategic themes were officially recognized as our institutional goals.

- Enhance the College’s Academic Excellence and Reputation
- Enrich Student, Faculty and Staff Experiences
- Promote More Effective Use of Resources
- Increase Environmental Conservation and Sustainability
- Provide Service to Our Region and Beyond
These institutional goals highlight a few important themes of our mission statement. We are first and foremost a place of learning for a diverse student body. We aspire to academic excellence in the scholarship and teaching of our faculty, as well as in the thinking and learning of our students. Our academic reputation is contingent upon maintaining and cultivating these high standards of academic excellence. Moreover, we are keenly invested in the quality of life of those who work and study at SUNY Plattsburgh. Because we are a relatively small institution we are especially committed to investing in the safety and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Finally, we seek to celebrate our distinctive physical location. Where we are geographically is intimately connected to who we are. We are shaped by our proximity to Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Mountains, and Canada in the programs of study and recreational opportunities we offer. And we return our service to the local community and beyond by cultural enrichment and economic development. Our institutional goals are consistent with our mission statement, and they also provide a coherent framework for sustaining and assessing our mission. \textbf{Standards 1-A.2, 1-C}

\subsection*{1.6 Strategic Planning}

Strategic and long-term planning have been part of the governance at SUNY Plattsburgh for decades, through the Faculty Senate’s Resources and Planning committee as well as ad hoc committees and task forces appointed through the years. The last Middle States review in 2002 and a SUNY-wide initiative to examine and review goals and objectives resulting in Memoranda of Understanding contributed substantially to the development of the college’s two most recent strategic plans (for 2004-2009 and 2009-2012). The following paragraphs provide more detail on the development of the most recent strategic plan.

In fall 2007, a College Planning Council Steering Committee (CPCSC) was formed to develop the next strategic plan for SUNY Plattsburgh. The membership of the CPCSC was drawn from the full spectrum of the institution’s administrative, teaching, and professional staff. The CPCSC began its work in February 2008. It developed a planning process, identified desired accomplishments and strategies, and drafted a mission statement. The CPCSC shared its work at a college-wide Planning Day in May 2008.

Following this separate committees defined the specific content of the Strategic Plan and gathered this work together, sharing it with the broader college community at the President’s Opening Day Breakfast and at Planning Day in August 2008, presenting its findings to the President’s Cabinet and the Faculty Senate Resources and Planning Committee, and consulting with other key campus constituents. CPCSC presented its completed Strategic Plan 2009-2012, entitled “A Proud Past, A Strong Future,” to the President’s Cabinet, Deans’ Cabinet, Planning Council, and full Faculty Senate in January 2009. Following approval by these bodies, “A Proud Past, A Strong Future” became the institution’s official strategic plan. \textbf{Standards 1-A.3, 1-A.4}

In September 2010, an accompanying Strategic Plan Template (SPT) was approved. The SPT articulates Strategies, Objectives, and Action Plans for each of the five institutional goals. These action plans identify facilitators, target dates, outcomes, and projected costs. The SPT has been updated periodically to show the status of work completed, in progress, or pending \textbf{(Strategic Plan Template)}. \textbf{Standards 1-A.1, 1-B}

Access to the Strategic Plan is provided on the SUNY Plattsburgh Web page. From Plattsburgh’s homepage a single click leads to “Resources for SUNY Plattsburgh Faculty and Staff.” This page provides links to over 40 resources organized under 21 categories, including the campus handbook, classroom resources, policies and benefits, assessment, diversity, budget information, and faculty governance. Prominently displayed is a link to the Strategic Plan page \textbf{(Strategic Planning)}. Here one can access not only the full Strategic Plan, including the mission statement, vision statement, and pledge to students, but also a list of the five institutional goals with strategies for the implementation of each goal, the Strategic Plan Template, a history of the plan, and current membership lists of relevant committees and task forces together with their charges and responsibilities. This Web page provides faculty and staff access to the strategic planning process and our progress towards meeting our institutional goals. Additionally, the Office of Public Relations and Publications is charged with communicating key messages and themes linked to the current Strategic Plan, primarily to external audiences. To create a higher profile of our current Strategic Plan, as well as the planning process, President Ettling sends out periodic emails to the college community containing updates about the college’s progress in implementing particular objectives specified in the Strategic Plan Template. These updates are also publicized on the Web page about strategic planning \textbf{(Strategic Plan (2009-12) Accomplishments)}. \textbf{Standards 1-A.5, 1-E, 1-H}

\subsection*{1.7 Assessing Mission Effectiveness}

In November 2010, the President’s Cabinet approved an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP) \textbf{(Institutional Effectiveness Plan)}. This plan presents the process “through which SUNY Plattsburgh documents the fulfillment of its mission and its commitment to continuous improvement.” The IEP describes the assessment activities SUNY Plattsburgh has in place for monitoring and reviewing its mission and goals. The assessment and review of our mission takes place at two levels: (1) department and program level assessment \textbf{(Assessment Plan)}; and (2) institutional goals implemented through the Strategic Plan \textbf{(Strategic Planning Template)}.

Assessment plans of academic and non-academic departments, as well as General Education, are directly
linked to established standards and outcomes for each department’s own mission statement and goals, as well as to appropriate disciplinary and professional standards, including those for accredited programs. These assessment data are regularly collected, monitored, and posted on the college’s assessment Web page (Assessment at SUNY Plattsburgh). In addition, individual academic departments undergo a self-study and external review every five to seven years. These departmental level assessments complement the periodic assessment of overall progress on our institutional goals conducted by the Strategic Plan Implementation Task Force.

Data from the college’s Office of Institutional Research are also incorporated into these assessment activities, including those collected from periodically administered student and faculty opinion surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Student Opinion Survey (SOS), and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) (Office of Institutional Research). At least eight campus committees are directly involved in the coordination and monitoring of assessment activity. These committees and their responsibilities are described in Chapter Two of the Self-Study Report. A number of these committees are also directly involved with the budget process.

Additionally, the college relies on the Middle States self-study report process to gather and evaluate progress in meeting our institutional goals. This responsibility falls on the entire college community; the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and students (Middle States Accreditation). Standards 1-D, 1-F, 1-G, 6-N

1.8 Communicating With External Audiences

Significant changes at SUNY Plattsburgh are communicated to the Middle States’ Association Commission on Higher Education through adherence to the substantive change procedure, timely and accurate completion of the annual institutional profile, and periodic telephone and/or e-mail exchanges with our Middle States’ liaison. One proposed change in the past ten years has called for a substantive change proposal: Hudson Valley Community College has been approved as an additional location.

Similarly, the college regularly informs other accrediting agencies of significant changes in accordance with the regulations of each body. This includes not only reports filed by deans or the Provost’s Office concerning academic programs but also those filed through Student Affairs concerning such matters as compliance with NCAA regulations. The college’s Office of Institutional Research regularly completes a variety of reports for SUNY, New York State, and federal offices in a timely manner; offices within the Division of Business Affairs provide accurate and timely information for periodic audits and internal control reports; the University Police ensures that the college appropriately reports and makes public crime statistics; and the Office of Sponsored Research ensures that funding and regulatory agencies are kept apprised of relevant changes and developments related to research—to mention some of the major agencies and regulatory bodies with which the college shares information. The Provost’s Office keeps SUNY System Administration (and through SUNY, the State Education Department) apprised of significant changes in academic programs (and even minor changes in General Education) and ensures that the college responds in a timely manner to calls from SUNY for reports and information on such topics as assessment, transfer credit evaluation, international student recruitment, and others. Similarly, the President’s Office and the Office of the Vice President for Administration regularly respond to calls from SUNY System Administration for information on a variety of topics.

College administrators are in regular contact with our elected state and federal representatives; county, town, and city officials; and local and regional community and business leaders. The college community, local and regional leaders, and the general public are also kept apprised of significant developments at the college through the Office of Public Relations, as well as through the offices most closely involved. Typically the information is made available through e-mail, updates to the college’s Web site, and press releases. The Office of Public Relations has adopted the ethical code recommended by the organization, Public Relations Society of America, as a guideline for communicating with external constituents, ensuring truthfulness in marketing campaigns, as well as to establish ethical standards between the college and outside vendors (Public Relations Society of America Code of Ethics). In these ways the college attempts to reach all relevant audiences with appropriate information. Standards 6-H, 6-M, 6-S

1.9 Conclusions

As the college begins to prepare for the next strategic planning cycle, we welcome the insights and recommendations that have emerged from the Middle States self-study process and look forward to incorporating any recommendations that might emerge from the Middle States visit in March. Our current review provides an opportunity to evaluate our progress in meeting the institutional goals identified in the Strategic Plan (2009-2012), as well as to consider new recommendations that will direct and guide the college into the future. SUNY Plattsburgh is now engaged in developing a new Strategic Plan, in coordination with a new Academic Plan. The process of developing these plans will begin this spring under the direction of the Provost’s Office. A lead committee, representative of various stakeholders, will be appointed in early spring 2012. The lead committee will utilize the strategy of focus groups in order to get a sense of future goals and direction for the campus. It is expected that the new strategic and academic plans will be completed by the end of the fall 2012 semester.