

**REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL
ON RESPONSES TO THE ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN
March 2007**

The *Academic Master Plan* that was adopted by Mississippi University for Women on May 15, 2006, charged Academic Council with overseeing implementation of the *Plan*. The *Plan* called for a review of the accomplishments of the plan during the fall semester and to use that review to “establish priorities including budget priorities for all academic and academic support units for the next fiscal year” (p. 61). Although it was intended that this process should be completed by the end of the fall semester, circumstances made the delay into the spring semester desirable. The university has set increasing enrollment as the top priority, and the IHL system has set as its top priority increasing the quantity and quality of four-year college graduates. In fall 2006 the university established an Enrollment Management Task Force to explore ways to increase MUW’s enrollment; this process included setting some enrollment goals by the academic programs and identifying resources required to meet these enrollment goals.

During the fall semester the academic programs submitted responses to the *Academic Master Plan*. Academic Council met on January 23 and January 30, 2007, to review the academic program responses to the *Academic Master Plan* and to begin establishing priorities that would fulfill the goals of the *Plan*, as well as address the university and system goal to increase the quantity and quality of college graduates. The following recommendations are intended to support this overall goal by 1) increasing the number of students at MUW; 2) increasing the retention of students from year to year and from enrollment to graduation; and 3) increasing the quality of graduates. The recommendations support increasing the number of students by increasing recruiting activities, providing discipline-specific scholarships, increasing and revising academic program offerings, and increasing opportunities for access to academic programs through online and other non-traditional formats. The recommendations support increasing retention by enhancing the academic support services, including additional lab support, intervention programs in critical general education areas, increased access and support for students with disabilities, and enhanced program offerings. The recommendations support increasing the quality of graduates by improving academic resources (library and technology), providing an adequate number of full-time faculty for program delivery, increasing retention of good faculty through increased compensation and benefits, improving the quality of faculty through better support for professional development, and providing adequate space for the delivery of academic programs.

I. Library Resources:

Increasing support for library resources is a top priority for every academic program. The ever-increasing cost of maintaining access to electronic resources means that there has been a steady decrease over several years in what was already an inadequate budget for purchase of library books. During that same period, the library lost two professional positions.

Recommendations: 1) Provide funding for “hard copy” materials, beginning with a minimum of \$75,000 for undergraduate programs and \$50,000 for graduate programs. This is also a good fundraising opportunity, for either large or small gifts. 2) Fill the position of serials librarian, which has been vacant since 2000. 3) Increase the current 3/4-time position to full time.

II. Program Delivery:

The university needs to increase access to programs by offering additional programs online, through creative scheduling, and by other non-traditional means. The Colleges have identified areas for increased online offerings. Beginning in the fall semester 2007, students will be able to complete all the courses required for the Business Administration major (General Business Concentration) online. Plans are underway to increase online offerings of paralegal courses, as well as other courses across the curriculum. Certificate programs in such areas as Gifted Studies, Teaching English as a Second Language, and Nurse Educator could also be offered online; certificate programs might ultimately lead students into degree programs.

In order to increase online programming, faculty need time and resources to develop online courses, especially at the point of planning for the initial offering of the courses. Furthermore, offering programs both online and on campus will require additional faculty.

Recommendations: 1) Purchase LUMINUS software to support WebCT (\$30,000). 2) Designate fees collected from the IHL eCampus courses for a fund to support faculty development of online courses. 3) Create a Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology to support and train faculty in instructional technology. 4) Develop a plan for meeting the needs of online students with disabilities and train faculty to meet these needs. 5) Colleges/Institute should explore offering courses in other non-traditional ways, such as compressed-time formats, inter-session courses, etc. 6) Colleges/Institute should consider developing 2+2 programs for online delivery with individual community colleges.

III. Scholarships:

One way to enhance recruitment of students to specific programs is to provide scholarships for students in those programs. This is a revenue-neutral recruiting effort. Funds would be reallocated from existing scholarship sources to support targeted programs.

Recommendation: Designate some general scholarship funds to academic affairs for distribution to specific academic programs. These funds will be managed by the programs to support faculty efforts to recruit students and build programs.

IV. New Programs:

The *Academic Master Plan* requires continuous program review. This review includes assessing the quality and continued value of existing programs and curricula, assessing the effectiveness of methods of program delivery, and assessing the market for new programs within the mission of the university. Overall program review also requires a full review of the general education program.

The university and the IHL Board have approved a new master's degree in Educational Leadership that will be implemented in the fall 2007. The university has also approved for fall 2007 a minor in Religious Studies (no further approval required). Approval to plan an MFA degree in Physical Theatre has been granted by Graduate Council (for 2008 implementation), and an ad hoc committee has prepared a proposal to begin the process for developing a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. Both the Physical Theatre and Interdisciplinary Studies degrees should require no additional funds for implementation. Culinary Arts faculty and Food Sciences faculty at Mississippi State University are also preparing a proposal to offer a joint bachelor's degree in culinology.

Recommendations: 1) Prepare a full proposal for an Interdisciplinary Studies major to be submitted through university channels in time for fall 2007 approval by the IHL Board (for fall 2008 implementation). 2) Prepare a full proposal for an MFA in Physical Theatre to be submitted through university channels in time for fall 2007 approval by the IHL Board (for fall 2008 implementation). 3) Prepare a full proposal for a bachelor's degree in culinology to be offered jointly with Mississippi State University. 4) Ask the Core Curriculum Committee to review the Core Curriculum and report to the faculty by January 7, 2008.

V. Faculty and Academic Staff Positions:

The quality and appeal of academic programs is in large measure a factor of the university's ability to attract and retain strong faculty. The following faculty positions are currently vacant or searches are underway to fill vacancies that will occur at the end of the academic year. In some cases, unfilled positions have been deleted from the budget over the past 5-7 years without explanation.

College of Arts and Sciences:

- Art Education/Ceramics
- Biology (3)*
- Chemistry*
- English/Creative Writing*
- History
- Interior Design
- Mathematics*
- Music
- Music Education
- Paralegal Studies (director or faculty)

Science Lab Coordinator
Spanish (restore full time from half time)
Theatre
Writing Lab Staff

College of Business

Dean*
Accounting (terminal degree)*
Economist

College of Education and Human Sciences:

Educational Leadership (graduate)*
Health Education (graduate)*
Education/Field Placement*
Psychology
Family Studies
Sociology

College of Nursing and Speech-Language Pathology

BSN Program Director*
BSN Faculty*
ASN Faculty*

Culinary Arts Institute

Chef Instructor*
Nutritionist**

Library

Director of the Library*
Serials Librarian
Other Professional Position

Registrar's Office

Professional Staff Position

*These positions are currently being advertised to fill for next year.

**This position will support Culinary Arts, Family Studies, Health Education, and Nursing.

Recommendations: 1) Provide competitive salaries and benefits to faculty to increase faculty-staff retention and maintain a stable workforce and, therefore, maintain reliable programming. 2) Fill vacant faculty positions in a timely manner in order to be able to offer consistently a full range of courses for the academic programs and maintain program integrity. 3) Restore positions lost over the last 5-7 years that are critical to program success. 4) As part of the university's fundraising efforts, seek donors to establish endowed chairs across the academic disciplines.

VI. Continuing Education:

After the Continuing Education office was dissolved, the responsibilities for continuing education activities were given to the Colleges/Institutes. Generally, however, the academic areas are not staffed adequately to be able to offer programming outside the normal academic credit programs at any significant level. Academic Council has identified several areas for possible continuing education activities, some of which could be delivered online and some of which might lead to enrollment in degree programs. Examples of non-credit programs include English as a Second Language, and Spanish for health care and law enforcement personnel; certificate programs that carry academic credit might include gifted studies, nurse educator, and teaching English as a second language. Continuing education is a potential source of revenue, offers an avenue for engaging the community in university activities, and is a means of recruiting students to credit programs. Continuing Education must be self-sustaining financially.

Recommendations: 1) Hire a half-time administrative assistant immediately to manage the paperwork for continuing education programs (to be funded from continuing education fees). 2) Provide a database in Banner for CEUs. 3) As continuing education grows, consider reinstating the continuing education office to assist the Colleges/Institute in developing and marketing programs.

VII. Space:

There are considerable space needs for programs that are experiencing significant growth, as well as for several areas of academic support. Culinary Arts, for example, has outgrown the space in Shattuck Hall. As a program with high growth potential, space needs to be allocated to provide for increased enrollment. Furthermore, Culinary Arts needs space for a restaurant laboratory. The restaurant lab might be a fundraising opportunity for investment from the business community. Space for the art program is also an ongoing concern.

Additional space is needed in Academic Support Services. Space is not adequate for providing necessary accommodations for students with disabilities, and the university has outgrown the space in Reneau for tutoring and advising. The registrar's office also needs additional space for serving students and storing records.

Recommendation: Review the space needs and availability across the campus and realign as appropriate to accommodate program needs. Attend to the immediate space needs for Culinary Arts, Art, and Academic Support Services in particular.

VIII. Other Instructional Support:

The following additional needs have been identified in the *Academic Master Plan* and in the review of the *Plan* by Academic Council as critical to recruitment and retention of students and to quality instruction. These needs also represent good funding opportunities from external sources.

- Support for Faculty Development (research and travel to professional meetings)
- Lab Upgrades and Staffing
- Antenna for Radio Station
- Additional Smart Classrooms
- Nursing Simulation Models
- Human Performance Lab
- Equipment and Adaptive Software for Students with Disabilities.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

General:

Library (increase for book purchases from \$0 to 75,000 for undergraduate programs and 30,000 to 50,000 for graduate programs—accreditation)	\$95,000
LUMINUS Software (for WebCT/Banner interface)	30,000

Faculty/Staff Positions: (cost estimates include salary plus benefits)

Educational Leadership (to support new graduate degree)	75,000
Dean of Business (additional funding)	25,000
Nutritionist (supports curricula in Culinary Arts, Health Education, Family Studies, and Nursing)	65,000
Sciences Stockroom Manager/Lab Coordinator (safety)	41,000
Writing Lab Coordinator	44,000
Health Education (upgrade position from temporary to tenure track)	12,000
Serials Librarian (restore position)	46,000
Professional Staff, Registrar’s Office	44,000
Coordinator, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology	44,000
Psychology (meet enrollment needs)	55,000
Economist	62,000
Business (2 positions from half time to full time)	70,000

Spanish (restore full time position from half time)	32,000
Theatre (upgrade from temporary to tenure track)	15,000
Accounting (upgrade salary to fill position)	26,000
Music (restore position—meet enrollment needs)	52,000
Professional Librarian (upgrade from ¾ time to full time)	10,000
Family Studies (meet enrollment needs)	52,000
Sociology (restore position)	52,000

Additional General:

Start-up Costs for Online Courses (planning, development, Implementation, ADA training)	25,000
Equipment and Adaptive Software for Students with Disabilities (ADA)	2,250
Faculty Travel and Professional Development (no increase in about 15 years; also support new positions)	30,000
Antenna for Radio Station (necessary to retain license)	45,000
Additional Smart Classrooms	60,000

REVENUE-NEUTRAL AND SPACE PRIORITIES

Scholarships:

Designate some general scholarships to academic affairs to recruit students to specific academic programs.

Programs:

- Implement the Religious Studies minor.
- Complete and submit to IHL proposals for BS/BA in Interdisciplinary Studies, BS in Culinary, and MFA in Physical Theatre.
- Review the Core Curriculum.
- Plan to offer courses in nontraditional time formats.
- Increase offerings of continuing education courses.

Space:

- Increase space for Culinary Arts instruction, labs, and storage.
- Provide space for Ceramics courses for Art.
- Increase space for accommodating students with disabilities (ADA compliance) and for tutorial services.
- Increase space for Registrar's office for document storage and personnel.