

Towson University
Strategic Academic Plan
2010-2016

University Summary Mission Statement

Towson University, as the state's comprehensive Metropolitan University, offers a broad range of undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, arts and applied professional fields that are nationally recognized for quality and value. Towson emphasizes excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and community engagement responsive to the needs of the region and the state. In addition to educating students in the specialized knowledge of defined fields, Towson's academic programs develop students' capacities for effective communication, critical analysis, and flexible thought, and they cultivate an awareness of both difference and commonality necessary for multifaceted work environments and for local and global citizenship and leadership. Towson's core values reflect high standards of integrity, collaboration, and service, contributing to the sustainability and enrichment of the culture, society, economy, and environment of the State of Maryland and beyond.

University Vision

Towson University will be a regionally ranked Doctoral/Research – Intensive University, with a student population of 25,000 by the year 2016, that provides the appropriate array of programs to meet students' intellectual and cultural needs as well as respond to workforce requirements. At the undergraduate level, the University will build on existing interdisciplinary and programmatic strengths. At the graduate level, curriculum development will occur up to the doctoral level to support more fully our commitment to professional fields in the arts and sciences, information technology, education, the health professions, and business. Through its faculty known for excellent teaching, theoretical and applied research, and creative activities, the University will respond to the advancement of the surrounding diverse region by forming formal partnerships and collaborations based on the metropolitan university model.

Academic Vision

Towson University's academic community will be one of America's exemplary metropolitan-based learning environments, known both for its understanding of and passion for engaging people in collaborative and creative relationships that result in individual and collective learning, discovery and personal growth, and also for its faculty's and students' active participation in the life of the metropolitan region of Baltimore, sharing this learning and discovery wherever possible locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Mission of the Division of Academic Affairs

To provide resources, services and leadership that support the academic programs of the University.

Vision of the Division of Academic Affairs

To be a highly flexible organization that emphasizes collaboration and creativity in its provision of leadership, vision and resources for both the effective day-to-day support of the University's academic units and the attainment of the University's academic goals.

Core Values

Towson's academic community is a special one in which friendliness, caring and nurturing are much more than hollow words. In addition to the preservation of these important characteristics, this academic plan identifies a set of core values that will guide and inform the decisions and actions of every academic unit at the university. While regular review and assessment may change aspects of the plan as it is implemented over the next eight years, the following core academic values will remain unchanged and because of this, adherence to these principles by the academic community's leadership and decision-makers will determine the successful attainment of the university's academic goals. These core academic values are:

- Intellectual depth and integrity
- Creativity in teaching, learning and discovery that leads to individual and collective transformation
- Collaboration across disciplines
- High standards in personal and unit performance
- Commitment to a diverse and multicultural community
- Civic responsibility and engagement

Every decision made, no matter how small or large, will address the question: "Does this adhere to and contribute to Towson's core academic values?"

Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Collaboration + Creativity + Innovation = Transformation. Towson's strategic academic plan uses this simple formula to identify the strategies and tactics most likely to result in the achievement of the academic community's goals by 2016. This is an ambitious plan that relies for its success on the evaluation and improvement of current offerings and programs, developing new programs, seizing opportunities, and raising financial resources. It also stresses changing some ingrained behaviors and centuries-old ways of doing things that inhibit Towson's success as a major metropolitan university. As one participant in a focus group wrote down on a survey taken during the session, "'We've always done it this way,' should be banned from Towson's vocabulary." The following plan takes this advice to heart.

Goal 1: An Exemplary Place to Learn and Grow Personally and Professionally

Towson's academic community makes a personal and collective difference to faculty and students by creating and providing intellectually stimulating and self-reflective experiences as well as challenging opportunities that will generate thoughtful, confident and purposeful life-long learning, discovery and decision-making.

Faculty members, through teaching, learning and research/scholarship (discovery), engage with their students in experiences that result in:

- Curiosity and the courage to ask questions
- Problem-solving (taking action and getting results)—identifying solutions (and not just describing them) through critical thinking and creativity
- An ease with numbers, basic scientific concepts and technology
- The ability to externalize ideas through writing, speaking and a variety of other communications media
- The understanding of how much the fine and performing arts, scientific discovery, the liberal arts, physical well-being, and life management can elevate the spirits and release tension from the day-to-day world
- The ability to lead, follow, collaborate, and work independently
- An understanding of and commitment to diversity, inclusion and global engagement

Strategy 1: The Development of Engaging Academic Programs and Pedagogies

Have every Towson college review and evaluate its effectiveness as a learning community, i.e., the curricular content for each of its academic programs and the methods used to engage students and faculty in learning and discovery.

Tactic 1: Research and Communication: Conduct research on effective teaching and learning methodologies in their own and other disciplines and widely disseminate this information to inform and empower the University's faculty

Tactic 2: Faculty Development: Develop and provide mandatory faculty development programs and workshops in teaching and learning to include use of technology as a pedagogical tool

Tactic 3: Curricular Review: Charge and facilitate the process of each college's faculty's review of their curriculum with a maximum 124-credit requirement, insuring currency and creativity in curricular content, compliance with disciplinary content standards, and completion within four years.

Tactic 4: Learning Success: Develop with each college's faculty ways to determine the effectiveness of their teaching and learning

Tactic 5: Towson's Global Engagement—International Programs: Evaluate all current international programs and their management in order to develop a focused strategic plan for providing international experiences for Towson students and faculty

Strategy 2: University Library=Towson's Learning Hub

Establish the University Library as a vibrant learning and teaching hub for students and faculty

Tactic 1: Teaching and Learning Center: Establish a “best practice” Towson Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence within the University Library

Tactic 2: Expansion of Library's Role in Learning: Expand the University Library's role in academic support, student development and campus life in new and creative ways that define the role and responsibility of academic libraries in 21st Century universities

Strategy 3: Collaboration

Identify collaborative opportunities across departments, colleges and divisions and create innovative learning programs and experiences that serve as magnets to engaging students and faculty in teaching, learning and discovery

Tactic 1: Office of Academic Collaboration: Develop within the Division of Academic Affairs an Office of Academic Collaboration charged with the responsibility of identifying and facilitating both internal and external collaboration

Tactic 2: The Honors College: Evaluate and develop a plan to transition the Towson Honors College into a truly high quality and research-based undergraduate experience that is metropolitan in spirit, developing students who are engaged, informed citizens with leadership skills and a passion for intellectual challenge

Tactic 3: Off-campus Delivery Sites: Develop and staff appropriate academic programs for off-campus delivery, e.g. Harford and Hagerstown sites, and evaluate the Towson Learning Network (TLN) administrative structure with the goal of expanding responsibilities to include all academic off-site programs

Tactic 4: Interdisciplinary Graduate Degree Programs: Develop a plan to create a set of interdisciplinary graduate programs that will meet evolving local, regional, national and global workforce needs

Tactic 5: On-line Delivery: Identify markets and opportunities for developing and staffing appropriate academic courses and programs for on-line delivery

Strategy 4: Research and Scholarship

Increase the University's research and scholarly opportunities and activities

Tactic 1: An Office of Undergraduate Research: Develop within the Division of Academic Affairs and in conjunction with each of the colleges an Office of Undergraduate Research to identify and facilitate experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students within and across their colleges and to determine ways to verify their success

Tactic 2: Graduate Programs and Research: Establish a University-wide task force to recommend how best to organize an academic administrative unit to support graduate programs and the administration of grants and contracts and then implement and monitor the success of this unit

Strategy 5: Full-time Faculty

Increase the ratio of full-time faculty to student FTE

Tactic 1: Realign Enrollment: Work with the colleges to balance faculty size with enrollment distribution within the majors, with a goal to identify areas with capacity for student growth, including potential for new collaborative programs

Tactic 2: Growth Priorities: Establish a process to prioritize new full-time faculty hires with an emphasis on individuals who exhibit interests in collaborative programs and activities and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and discovery

Strategy 6: Division Collaboration

Develop opportunities for optimizing both faculty and student teaching, learning and discovery “outside the classroom and laboratory” by collaborating with other University divisions

Tactic 1: Division of Student Affairs: Collaborate with the Division of Student Affairs to identify and develop joint projects that will increase opportunities for student engagement and success

Tactic 2: Division of Economic and Community Outreach: Collaborate with the Division of Economic and Community Outreach (DECO) to identify and develop research and outreach opportunities for faculty and experiential learning opportunities for students

Goal 2: A Nationally and Internationally Recognized Metropolitan University

Towson’s campus is the metropolis of Baltimore. The academic community takes seriously its responsibility to make a social, cultural and economic difference by learning from, leading and collaborating with the Baltimore metropolitan region. The results achieved by the university’s metropolitan engagement have earned it both national and international recognition. Faculty and student engagement results in:

- Real world experiences, reinforced by on-campus learning experiences
- Identifying and seeking solutions to urban issues and challenges
- An understanding of what is and what is not ethical professional and personal conduct
- An appreciation and comfort with diversity in all its forms
- A thirst to serve other communities regionally, nationally and globally

Strategy 1: Exposure to Diversity

Attract and educate a more diverse and underserved student population from the Baltimore metropolitan area

Tactic 1: Enrollment Management: Learn about targeted populations of students, including adult citizens, from diverse backgrounds and develop creative marketing strategies for attracting them to Towson

Tactic 2: Serving Diversity: Evaluate and improve academic services for students from diverse backgrounds—non-traditional students, students from historically under-represented groups, international students and English language learners, etc.—paying particular attention to varied levels of academic preparation. Coordinate with the Division of Student Affairs on projects that improve student success and retention

Tactic 3: A Welcoming Community: Collaborate with the Division of Student Affairs and the colleges to create a welcoming multicultural campus community and to foster discourse among stakeholders who hold divergent economic, social, political, religious, and philosophic views.

Strategy 2: Creative and Socially Important Partnerships

Identify and coordinate faculty and student partnerships in the metropolitan region that address urban issues and challenges in ways that increase civic awareness and responsibility and potentially provide national and global solutions and best practices

Tactic 1: Cherry Hill: Improve leadership and coordination so that the Cherry Hill Learning Zone Initiative becomes even more comprehensive and effective

Tactic 2: Service Learning: Part of the Curriculum: Work with the colleges and the Division of Student Affairs to increase and facilitate faculty involvement in the development of service learning as academic experiences—linked to the curriculum—in the metropolitan region

Tactic 3: Research and Scholarly Work in the Metropolis: Charge the Office of Research to work collaboratively with the colleges and the Division of Economic and Community Outreach (DECO) to identify research and scholarship opportunities in the metropolitan region that can be linked to faculty interests

Goal 3: A University with High Standards

Towson's community of learners, scholars and researchers value above all else academic quality, intellectual discourse and in-depth exposure to a range of disciplines and ideas. Towson's academic community demands a high level of performance, individual responsibility and self-discipline. All the leaders of academic units and faculty members collectively understand the meaning of "high standards" and model it in practice to their students and staff, which results in:

- Greater efficiency and effectiveness throughout the academic community
- The ability to be disciplined and to value high quality in all aspects of one's life
- Ethical and respectful behavior
- Better self-understanding and confidence
- Meaningful evaluations and grades
- Academic integrity at all levels

Strategy 1: Best Practice Student Advising

Improve student advising to ensure student success in course selection, the identification of learning and discovery opportunities and the exploration of future directions

Tactic 1: Student Advocacy Program: Develop and coordinate a college-based Student Advocacy Program to address advising concerns for all students

Tactic 2: Advising and Evaluation: Redefine advising as an element of the teaching criterion for tenure, promotion and merit evaluations

Tactic 3: The Towson Promise: Develop and implement a Towson Promise that commits both advisers and advisees to high performance standards that result in the attainment of a degree within four years

Tactic 4: Transfer Student Advising: Develop and implement an effective pre- and post enrollment advising service for transfer students

Strategy 2: Special Student Populations

Develop programs that will provide the support required to help students who are entering Towson from nontraditional routes to be successful in their academic work

Tactic 1: Transfer Students: Work with the Office of Student Affairs to create a special and highly effective orientation program

Tactic 2: Underprepared Students: Evaluate and upgrade the services of the Student Achievement Center so that underprepared first-year and transfer students receive the special attention they need in order to be successful in their academic programs

Tactic 3: Adult Students: Create with the Office of Student Affairs a special orientation program for adult students and working professionals

Strategy 3: Faculty-Student Accountability

Improve academic rigor at the undergraduate and graduate levels so that students are held accountable for their own learning and faculty are held accountable for the development of and student adherence to fair, clearly communicated and appropriately challenging learning goals

Tactic 1: Student Course Evaluations ≠ Faculty Performance Evaluation: Uncouple the student course evaluation process from tenure, promotion and merit evaluations for faculty and link it to curricular improvement and faculty development in teaching and learning excellence

Tactic 2: Challenging Content: In conjunction with Goal 1, Strategy 1, Tactic 3, work with the colleges to evaluate and develop course syllabi that are appropriately challenging with high expectations for student performance

Tactic 3: Early Warning: In conjunction with the colleges, evaluate and establish procedures and safety networks for identifying students who are having difficulty with their academic work

Strategy 4: Definition of Faculty Work

Review, evaluate and redefine faculty work load to maximize faculty productivity and student learning

Tactic 1: Learning and Discovery First, Numbers Which Matter Second: In partnership with the University Senate and AAUP, clarify and define what faculty work load entails in relation to an academic community that is truly committed to teaching, learning and discovery at the highest level of performance

Tactic 2: Learning How to Evaluate: Establish a mandatory program for all faculty that prepares them for conducting effective peer evaluations in all aspects of faculty work

Tactic 3: Peer Evaluation Process: In partnership with the University Senate, AAUP and UPTRM, review, evaluate and implement a more effective peer evaluation process for Towson University

Goal 4: A University that Invests in a Model Academic Community

Towson's academic community needs to find effective and efficient ways to model an engaged learning community that is nonetheless BIG. This means finding the necessary resources not just to cope with but to excel at being a university with a large student population. The university can no longer expect to find the necessary dollars it requires from the citizens of Maryland or from the students who enroll in the institution; these financial resources are going to have to come from private and entrepreneurial sources.

Strategy 1: New Cross-Divisional Financial Goals and Strategies

Collaborate with the other University Divisions to develop a realistic and creative set of strategies to increase financial resources for the academic community

Tactic 1: Enrollment Management and Visibility: Develop a strategically targeted marketing plan for undergraduate and graduate enrollment as well as a strategically targeted visibility plan for the academic community at Towson

Tactic 2: College Advancement Plans: Develop and implement individual and strategic fundraising plans for the colleges

Tactic 3: Resources and Priorities: Establish an academic budget that ties the allocation of resources to priorities

Strategy 2: Changing the Deans' Role in Financial Planning and Resource Development

Vest more authority in the deans for the budgets of their respective colleges

Tactic 1: College Strategic Plans: Facilitate the development and implementation of strategic plans as well as an ongoing strategic planning process with regularly scheduled reviews and revision for each of the University's colleges

Tactic 2: College Financial Plans: Work with each of the deans to develop a financial plan to support the goals of his/her strategic plan

Conclusion

Each of the colleges at Towson will be developing their own strategic plans in conjunction with this overarching academic plan. Preliminary plans have been developed by the Colleges and the University Library, with final plans to be submitted by January 15, 2011. Once these plans are in hand, the Office of Academic Affairs will develop, in conjunction with the colleges, time frames for completion of every component of each plan, budgets for the implementation of these plans and the master academic plan and measurements for determining the success of all aspects of the plans.

In addition, the Office of Academic Affairs will work closely with the Marketing Department within the Office of University Advancement to identify ways to make the successes of the academic community highly visible to the many constituencies that will be instrumental in helping Towson University to reach its 2016 goals.