

## INTRODUCTION

Before reading the following draft document, review the University's Mission and Vision Statements, Philosophy and Objectives published in the *2009-2010 Catalog* (Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community & Technical College, 2009). These guiding principles outline the institution's responsibility to provide a sound education to students and outreach efforts to promote career enhancement, cultural enrichment, and personal skill development.

Fairmont State University's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, *Defining our Future* (Strategic Planning Committee, 2005), laid out a blueprint for achieving its vision and was built upon the following university-wide core values:

**SCHOLARSHIP:** To celebrate the joy and wonder of discovery through rigorous scholarship, we promote critical thinking from the first class through life-long learning and ensure the development of new knowledge.

**OPPORTUNITY:** To grow, learn, engage, and contribute through accessible, quality education, we provide opportunities to grow and to discover goals, both personal and communal.

**ACHIEVEMENT:** To reach personal and community goals through disciplined effort, we facilitate and honor achievement.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** To fulfill obligations to our selves, the learning community, our society, and the future through mutually responsible conduct, we act with integrity, we respect diversity, and we pursue an informed worldview.

The overall purpose of the Strategic Plan was to make progress on the following seven original Strategic Goals.

- Goal 1:** Empower faculty and students to achieve high levels of teaching and learning.
- Goal 2:** Cultivate and strengthen the educational, economic, and cultural well-being of our region.
- Goal 3:** Expand and promote community education.
- Goal 4:** Develop select graduate programs with a focus on regional needs.
- Goal 5:** Create a student life environment that enhances participation in campus events.
- Goal 6:** Provide a comprehensive, integrated approach to the First Year Experience that encourages student success.
- Goal 7:** Develop, retain, and recruit high-quality people who contribute to a satisfying and productive work environment.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2008 and 2009, although faced with unprecedented challenges, the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff propelled Fairmont State closer to its vision. Fairmont State students increasingly engaged in scholarship and community service, faculty members continued to excel in teaching and research, and programs and partnerships positively impacted our region and the world. The following list of accomplishments contains only select highlights from the past two years:

- **Faculty** – Recruited outstanding faculty in the social sciences, and professional fields. Introduced new ways of recognizing and honoring faculty scholarship.
- **Scholarship** – The Charles J. McClain Scholarship was created and awarded to three students in 2009. The Masquers were invited by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts to perform their production of *Remembering #9: Stories from the Farmington Mine Disaster* at the Cultural Center Theatre in Charleston in conjunction with Arts Day at the Legislature.
- **Community** – Students across campus participated in various community service projects--Operation Christmas Child, Soles to Soles, and the Salvation Army Angel Tree program-- and provided supplies and dinners to the Ronald McDonald House. Enhanced alumni involvement is evident across campus.
- **Programs** – During the Fall 2009 semester, Fairmont State piloted MAP-Works to help students reach greater levels of academic success, to prevent students from dropping out by identifying problems earlier, by building relationships, and by connecting students with campus resources. New programs or initiatives include the Accelerated RN-BSN Track, the Non-Traditional LPN-ASN program, and the National Security and Intelligence Program Intelligence Lab, also known as Open Source Intelligence Exchange-FSU (OSIX-FSU).
- **Partnerships** – Fairmont State University signed new international *Memos of Understanding* with Ansan College in South Korea, the University of Calabria in Italy, and the University of Babylon in Iraq. New partnerships have been formed with the Criminal Investigation Unit of the IRS, the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation, the West Virginia Digital Entertainment Library Initiative (WV DELI), the West Virginia Nursing Leadership Institute from Fairmont General Hospital (FGH), and the Centralized Student Career Program (CSCP).
- **Teaching and Learning** – Faculty training and subsequent utilization of TaskStream enhances student assessment data collection. The adoption of new general studies outcomes and significant development on a new general studies curriculum underscores our commitment to teaching excellence.

As a community, Fairmont State has embarked on a long journey to achieve its vision, which requires openness to opportunity, flexibility, and commitment to fiscal responsibility. Now in its fourth year of implementation, the Fairmont State community needs to review the Strategic Plan, make necessary changes, and adjust its course. The Fairmont State community should also evaluate and recalibrate commitments of people and resources allocated to achieving the Strategic Goals. The revised Strategic Plan, *Redefining Our Future*, must take into consideration emergent strategies, and changes affecting the University's intended course.

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## STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

The University's Presidential transition and heightened global economic uncertainty over the past year made an assessment of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan to determine progress and trajectory toward achieving the University's Strategic Goals imperative. This assessment included an examination of the contextual changes within which Fairmont State operates; and, examination of these contextual changes revealed the following selected strategic challenges Fairmont State faces in the coming years.

### ❖ *The ongoing global economic uncertainty*

The national and West Virginia economy are in the midst of a very severe recession. The outlook for the state is dependent upon on the economic trends of the national and global economies. West Virginia's employment is expected to stabilize during the first half of 2010 and grow during the second half of the year. However, gains are likely to be slow and the state does not regain 2008 employment levels again until 2013 (WVU Research Corporation, 2009). Fairmont State University must be diligent in monitoring the situation and making the budgetary adjustments necessary to minimize the effect on our campus community.

### ❖ *The cost, access, and quality of higher education*

The Governor asked all state colleges and universities to 'freeze' tuition for the next academic year. Complicating this tuition freeze is the likely continuation of declining state support due to the economic recession and competing demands for available state resources. According to the Governor's Budget Director, fiscal year 2012 budgets will be established at fiscal 2009 funding levels and budget cycles thereafter will trend in a downward manner. Over the past ten years, Fairmont State University increased tuition and fees by 120.7%. One reason for this rate of increase was that the state's contribution to Fairmont State was among the lowest of all West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) institutions (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission & Community And Technical College System, 2009) The average Fairmont State University student has nearly \$20,000 of debt upon graduation. We must address the cost and quality of a degree from Fairmont State University in the strategic planning process.

The US Census ranked West Virginia last among all 50 states regarding the percentage of the population 25 years old and over with a bachelor's degree. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008) According to the West Virginia HEPC's 2007-2012 Master Plan (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, [2007]), more than 173,000 state residents have some college but no degree. Fairmont State University should work to improve access to higher education through innovative academic calendars or course schedules, regional initiatives or outreach affiliations.

### ❖ *The changing demographic landscape of West Virginia*

The number of West Virginia high school graduates is expected to decline through 2018. (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission & Community And Technical College System, 2009) Possible alternatives to address this declining student base include increasing the enrollment of distance education students, out-of-state students, and nontraditional students. According to data developed by the Office of Legislative Redistricting a large portion of the West Virginia population is located within a 25-mile radius of campus (West Virginia Legislative Auditor, 2010). Fairmont State should take appropriate steps to identify programs of distinction, capitalize on opportunities, and otherwise differentiate itself from the regional higher education market.

❖ *The separation, but continued co-location, of Fairmont State and Pierpont C&TC*

When originally developed, the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan reflected the combined institutional structure of Fairmont State and Pierpont Community & Technical College. On December 31, 2009, in response to legislative mandate, the two institutions entered into a Separation Agreement, making them fully independent while maintaining joint occupancy of the campus in Fairmont. The Separation Agreement contains a unique, explicit pledge by the two boards of governors to perpetually cooperate and collaborate. This approach should help both institutions weather the challenges which will continue to impact operations, finances, and enrollments.

❖ *The Higher Learning Commission accreditation site visit in 2012*

In order to maintain regional accreditation, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools will visit Fairmont State University and evaluate the following five (5) Criteria for Accreditation: 1) Mission and Integrity; 2) Preparing for the Future, 3) Student Learning and Effective Teaching, 4) Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge, and 5) Engagement and Service.

❖ *Increased focus on institutional accountability*

All public colleges and universities have an obligation to be responsible and trusted guardians of the public's resources and to communicate clearly and effectively about their stewardship of the public's investment in them. Fairmont State University is committed to satisfying this greater degree of public scrutiny and becoming a leader in promoting improved data systems, greater transparency and increased focus on student learning outcomes.

## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Because of the Strategic Challenges identified above, President Krepel initiated this assessment of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan. Although the trajectory toward the Plan's goals appeared positive, the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan required renewed focus and direction; the goals, action steps, and initiatives needed redefined to meet future challenges. The substantive changes to the Plan include:

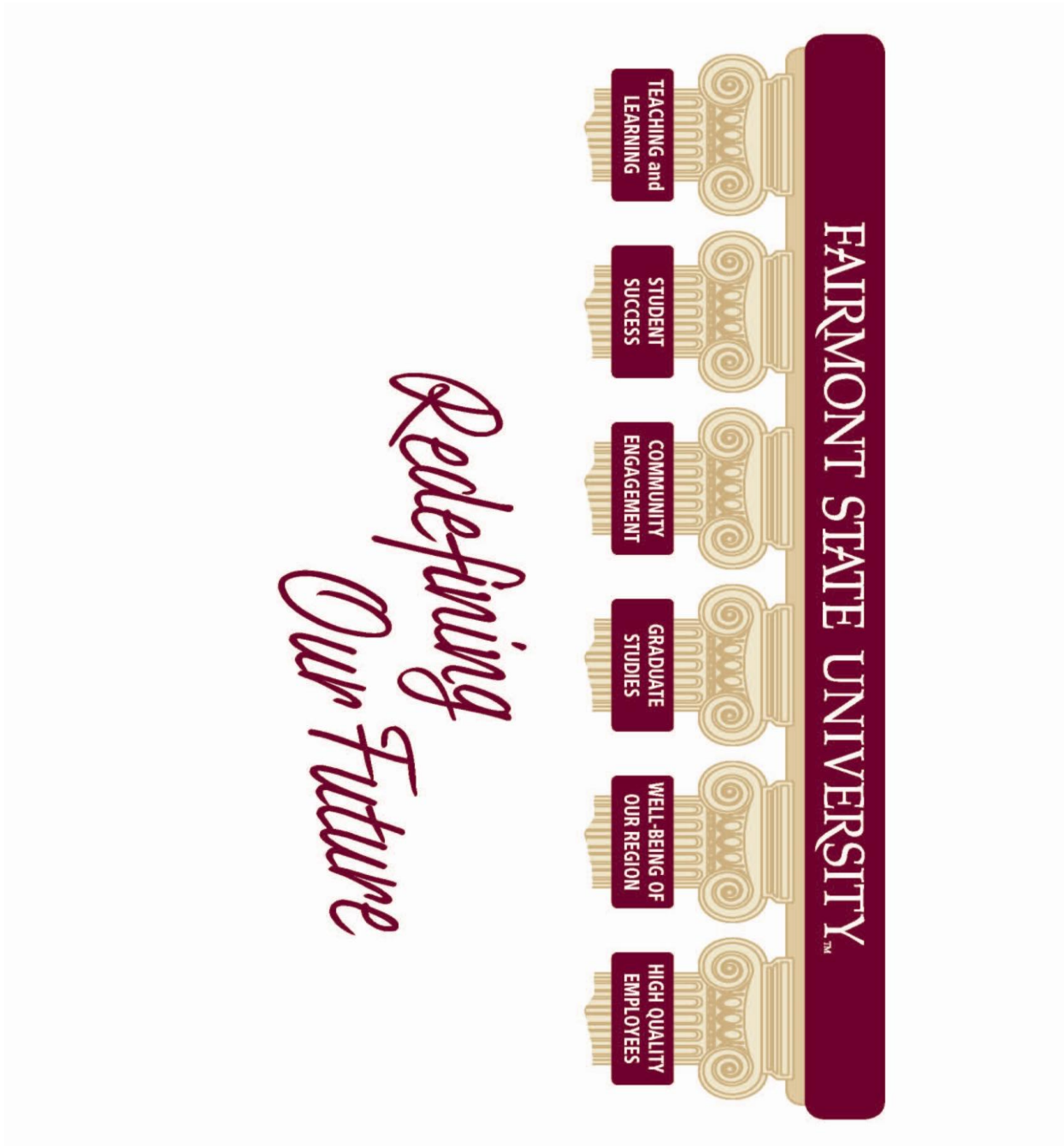
- Identification of strategic priorities to aid decision making and resource allocation;
- Reduction of the number of goals by combining two of the student-centered goals; and
- Modification of goal language for greater clarity and transparency and, in some cases, more inclusiveness.

### Our Strategic Priorities:

- **Quality** – Develop strategies to recruit and retain high-quality students, faculty, and staff, engage in activities to develop leadership, and strengthen our existing academic programs.
- **Distinction** – Focus on investing in programs or initiatives which will distinguish or 'brand' Fairmont State, reinforcing our strong community culture (*mentoring, loyalty, integrity, spirit, etc...*), and maintaining and forming new affiliations.
- **Financial Strength and Resource Stewardship** – Implement operational efficiency, develop and utilize resources effectively, allocate funds appropriately, and increase transparency of the budgetary process.

## REDEFINED STRATEGIC GOALS

Prior to the presentation of each major goal, a brief narrative is provided. This narrative provides the rationale and context of the discussions that took place before identifying the bulleted list of action items under each goal. **Please note – the goals as presented have equal value and do not occur in a prioritized order.** The following graphic depicts both the equality and the interconnection of the goals with Fairmont State University as the center.



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*Narrative: The faculty and staff of all post-secondary institutions value high-quality teaching and educational attainment which fosters responsible citizenship as well as personal and professional growth. An education from a post-secondary institution should enhance an individual's ability to think creatively, actively participate in a democratic society, and achieve future employment. Faculty and staff need to constantly develop their 'craft' of teaching and assessment abilities in light of new teaching instructional methodologies, technological advances, and the changing needs of our students. The integration of experiential learning and community engagement were viewed as essential to demonstrating content relevancy while capitalizing on students' active participation and desire to apply learned knowledge and skills.*

- Empower faculty, staff, and students to achieve high levels of **teaching and learning** at both the undergraduate and graduate level.
  - ✓ Increase degree completion via improved retention and quality advising, along with the development of creative approaches to serve all students.
  - ✓ Integrate experiential learning as a method to foster greater faculty and student involvement within their academic areas.
  - ✓ Increase integration of global awareness across the college experience.
  - ✓ Identify and deliver new programs to meet the local, regional, and national needs of citizens and business and industry.
  - ✓ Implement 'best practices' which improve teaching, learning, student retention, and degree completion.
  - ✓ Utilize and refine learning outcomes and assessment systems to improve teaching and learning.
  - ✓ Increase opportunities for all students, prior to graduation, to participate in research experiences.

*Narrative: All public institutions of higher learning are charged with assisting in the educational, economic and cultural well-being of their region. Fairmont State University has numerous opportunities to be more than just 'the College on the Hill' by taking a more active role in meeting the needs of our region. Utilizing expertise in selected program areas, faculty and staff could assist in providing educational experiences that enhance the employment and professional development opportunities to citizens of North Central West Virginia. These endeavors could take place in a variety of forms (e.g., delivery of occupationally-oriented baccalaureate study, assisting business, industrial, and public service agencies with specific research or training needs, or by offering continuing education programs for cultural enrichment or personal skill development). Experiential learning and community engagement were viewed as vitally important for distinguishing this institution from other regional universities. Many faculty and students are already actively engaged with these types of teaching and learning experiences, and they provide unique opportunities for students to connect their studies to current and future community or work-related endeavors. Experiential learning and community engagement allow for greater understanding of current problems, issues, or job-related skills and these experiences distinguish our students from those attending other institutions.*

- Cultivate and strengthen the educational, economic, and cultural well-being of our **region**.
  - ✓ Foster relationships with state and regional universities, colleges, and community and technical colleges to advance degree completion initiatives opportunities.
  - ✓ Promote opportunities for faculty, staff and students to engage in workforce and economic development needs of the region and the State.
  - ✓ Develop the human potential of the region by embracing cultural and global expression and sharing the expertise of faculty and students with business, educational, governmental, and non-governmental organizations.
  - ✓ Foster experiential learning and community engagement as core values of the institution.
  - ✓ Provide all students, prior to graduation, the opportunity to participate in job shadowing, co-ops, internships, or international study travel.

*Narrative: One of the goals of Fairmont State University is to enhance the quality of life for the residents in our region and the State of West Virginia. This is accomplished by providing opportunities for nonprofit and profit organizations, governmental agencies, and citizens to access the services and programs of the University. Service learning as an educational strategy integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, to instill civic responsibility, and to strengthen our local and regional communities as well as their global connections.*

- Expand and promote **community engagement**.
  - ✓ Encourage all faculty, staff, and students to participate in community service projects, research activities, and practical experiences which make learning more meaningful.
  - ✓ Provide reciprocal opportunities for nonprofit and for-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and citizens to access the services, resources, and programs of the University.
  - ✓ Institutionalize community engagement as an expectation for students enrolled in upper-division, major-related courses.
  - ✓ Explore local, regional, and global organizations to initiate and to establish potentially cooperative relationships and student engagement opportunities.

Narrative: *Fairmont State University currently offers a limited number of graduate degree programs. A review of educational trends indicates distance education, graduate degree programs, and professional development are among those qualities most desired by graduates and employers. Increased institutional support is needed to further develop graduate programs, support faculty and program development, and to foster the use of delivery systems that can meet these needs.*

➤ Enhance, promote and support **graduate study**.

- ✓ Identify and promote distance education to deliver graduate degree programs or professional development opportunities for time- or place-bound students.
- ✓ Develop alliances and partnerships with other Fairmont State academic units, other educational institutions, and business and industry to prepare individuals to obtain necessary certifications or advanced degrees.
- ✓ Develop and implement an entrepreneurial or cost/benefit model for analyzing and projecting revenue and cost implications for graduate programs.

Narrative: *Fairmont State University has a unique tradition of small class size, a caring and supportive faculty, and a sense of pride in inspiring student success. The faculty and staff of Fairmont State University can further assist in student recruitment, retention, graduation, and placement rates by fostering a culture of involvement in campus and community activities and by promoting positive messages which enhance our standing in the regional community. Improved and open communication systems such as MAP-Works, as well as a Student Access and Support Center, devoted to timely evaluation of, and response to, student need, are viewed as essential elements for improving student retention and providing more opportunities to publicize the numerous accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students.*

➤ Provide a comprehensive, integrated approach to the **Student Experience** which encourages participation and success.

- ✓ Cultivate a campus culture which establishes, promotes and cherishes its traditions, institutional history, and instills a sense of University and educational pride.
- ✓ Foster an environment which promotes and increases involvement in the campus, in the community, and engagement with the larger global community.
- ✓ Develop and implement communication systems and publications which meet the needs of all students, faculty, and staff.
- ✓ Improve the communication, availability, and quality of student service through creation of a Student Access and Support Center.

*Narrative: The professional development of faculty and staff are essential to student success. Faculty and staff need opportunities to further their careers and move into roles which can benefit the University. Developing a customer focus with our many constituents further enhances the reputation of the University while fostering student success and increased retention.*

- Recruit, develop, retain, and invest in a diverse group of **high-quality employees** dedicated to establishing, maintaining, and promoting a satisfying and productive work environment.
  - ✓ Implement professional development opportunities which focus on mentorship, leadership development, and succession planning.
  - ✓ Foster professional development in order to improve existing curriculum and achieve innovative, alternative course and program delivery methods which increase access and maintain high academic standards.
  - ✓ Revise and implement policy regarding University expectations for faculty, including a framework for definitions of scholarship, support for faculty professional development, and how service activities interface with annual faculty review and promotion/tenure.
  - ✓ Encourage and support the educational and degree attainment of faculty and staff to obtain the necessary professional development for personal enrichment or to obtain new career paths in today's global society.
  - ✓ Provide support systems and training which fosters faculty and staff collegiality, shared decision-making, and an overall campus culture which values a satisfying and rewarding educational and employment experience.
  - ✓ Develop a campus culture dedicated to faculty, staff, and student success and accomplishment (i.e., customer focus).

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