Introduction

The purpose of this monitoring report is to provide the University’s plan to come into compliance with accreditation standards in the following three areas:

1) Processes for assessment of student learning (according to Minimum Expectation 3.3.2);
2) Integration between (1) assessment, (2) strategic planning, and (3) strategic decision making University-wide; and,
3) Preparation for a Focused Visit to occur by July 2015.

This monitoring report provides a follow-up to the HLC report to the University in May 2013, and a subsequent request for a monitoring report. Challenges, concerns and opportunities for continuous improvement raised in the HLC response to the self-study, site visit and subsequent monitoring report communication centered on the following:

- Assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels (both specific to academic programs and systemically across the University);
• Assessment of broader University supports and services provided to ensure successful student experiences and outcomes;
• Commitment to and support for short and long range strategic planning; and
• Integration between strategic planning, academic and institutional assessment, and fiscal and programmatic decision-making.

The University has proceeded with action to create and fill a position at the vice-president level to provide leadership in assessment and strategic planning, and the interface between the two. The position was originally posted in the early summer 2013. Review of the initial pool led to a search committee decision to extend the search at a later date with a revised position description. In order to begin the 2013-14 academic year with leadership in place, the President appointed an interim “Vice President for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness.” The Interim VP will provide initial leadership to the process of revising and building structures and action steps in areas of assessment and evaluation (academic and organizational) and strategic planning. The interim Vice-President has been charged with providing leadership in efforts to:

• Establish preliminary work to enhance, and where necessary build, supports for best practices in assessment, evaluation, and strategic planning;
• Revise, and where necessary begin building, structures to sustain institutional assessment and effectiveness efforts over time;
• Assure that assessment information is used to inform strategic planning and budgeting in order to strengthen the entire campus.
• Build collaborative and interconnected relationships within and external to the University to ensure long term organizational and academic success, including interfaces of strategic planning (organizational, academic, and fiscal), action steps and assessment.

With this preliminary work undertaken, the University will finalize plans for a search in early 2014 and subsequent permanent appointment for the Vice-President’s position.

The narrative that follows explains how Fairmont State University will address these challenges over the next twelve to twenty-four months in preparation for a pending Focused Visit (to occur by July 2015). While this plan is intended to immediately address the concerns raised in the HLC report relative to the institution’s compliance with expectations for accreditation, it is intended to address and establish the University’s long term commitment to a set of core values, and subsequently strategic planning and decision making, and evaluation and assessment practices that have fidelity with those values. These processes and commitments will inform and make explicit successes and continuous improvement benchmarks toward a University whose work and practices reflect those values.

The narrative is organized around the following themes and challenges raised in site-visit and self-study review, and monitoring report conditions:

1. Integration of (1) institutional mission/vision/values, (2) strategic planning and decision making (including fiscal), and (3) assessment (academic and organizational);
2. Assessment (academic and organizational effectiveness);
3. Professional development in key areas of assessment and strategic planning; and
4. Building support and consensus for strategic planning, assessment, and University success.

1. Integration of (1) mission/vision/values, (2) strategic planning and decision making (including fiscal), and (3) assessment (academic and organizational)

The University recognizes the need to bring greater clarity, organization and strategic intent to efforts to build explicit connections between the institution’s mission and purpose, commensurate strategic planning and action, resource commitments, and assessment tied to critical benchmarks. We believe the first step is to articulate, revise and amend as needed, and integrate into all aspects of the University the key constructs that drive our mission, vision, core values, and strategic planning. Based on an analysis of these statements and documents as they currently exist, the constructs that drive the University’s aspirational identity include:

- That we be **nationally recognized** because we are an **accessible** learner-centered institution, we promote **student success**, we engage in **excellent teaching**, we create **flexible learning environments**, and we provide **superior support services**.
- We educate graduates who have the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind necessary for **intellectual growth, full and participatory citizenship, entrepreneurship** and **employability**.
- We offer programs and experiences that model and instill a desire to help **transform lives**.
- We promote **critical thinking**, pursue an **informed worldview**, and promote the **common good**.
- We celebrate the joy and wonder of **discovery and rigorous scholarship**, and ensure the development of new knowledge.
- Our students, staff and faculty **grow, learn, engage and discover**, and achieve **personal and community goals**.
- We facilitate and honor **achievement**.
- Our students and graduates discover roles for **responsible citizenship** including **mutually responsible conduct**, acting with **integrity**, and respecting **diversity**.

With these constructs and the essential University documents in which they are articulated driving our work, we will engage in sustained, stable, continuous university planning and assessment. This planning will be transparent and explicitly tied to action steps and decision-making pointed toward and informed by benchmarks, assessment and evaluation, and data. As part of these efforts (and discussed in further detail in the section on assessment below) we will engage in action steps in ways that enhance the sustainability of assessment and effectiveness efforts by fully integrating both pursuits into the fabric of our work. To these ends, the following action steps will be undertaken to enhance and ensure the integration of institutional mission and purpose, strategic direction, and operational effectiveness.
**Action Step 1.1**: Clarify, revise and update as needed organizational charts (academic and administrative units).

All University academic colleges and schools, administrative units, and sub-units will be asked to revise as appropriate or create where necessary organizational charts that include the following:

- Academic and administrative leadership of the unit;
- Sub-levels of the unit (e.g. departments, programs, centers and institutes, organizational sub-units); and
- As appropriate to the unit and sub-units, leadership and people with administrative and/or academic responsibilities.

Units will include Academic Affairs, all administrative support units, and offices and components within units. These organizational charts will be updated regularly, serve as the official organizational schema for the University, and provide the basis for activities related to strategic planning, strategic action steps, and assessment and organizational evaluation activities.

Target date for Completion: September 30, 2013

**Action Step 1.2**: Affirm (and edit and revise as necessary) Fairmont State University’s mission statement, vision statement and core values as constructs and language driving strategic planning, decision making and resource commitments.

Efforts to confirm and recommit to these constructs and language will include the Vice-Presidents, Deans and leaders in academic programs, leadership of the Faculty Senate, University staff, the Board of Governors, key stakeholders connected to the FSU Foundation and Institutional Advancement, and student leadership. The intent is to affirm and recommit to the documents as the basis for direction, planning, and critical organizational decision making. These actions will also serve as initial steps in asserting the constructs as pervasive parts of language used by students, faculty, and staff about the institution’s past, current, and future practices and plans.

Target date for completion: December 15, 2013

[Note: Flexibility will be exercised in allowing for ongoing adjustment, editing and fine-tuning of language given issues, challenges and opportunities that may emerge in processes that are described in action steps below.]

**Action Step 1.3**: Review, revise and adjust as needed, and confirm the *Fairmont State University Strategic Plan Update: Redefining Our Future* (Sept. 2010)

Key constituent groups will be asked to provide a critical review of the current University strategic plan adopted in September 2010. While we do not expect that major restructuring or revision will necessarily occur in the plan, we do want to update information and planning
relative to changes in the last thirty-six months in contextual and organizational challenges, and emergent needs that can be articulated from current data.

Target date for completion: January 31, 2014.

[Note: Flexibility will be exercised in allowing for continued editing and fine-tuning of strategic planning details given issues, challenges, and opportunities that may emerge in processes that are described in action steps below.]

**Action Step 1.4:** As part of the strategic planning process and subsequent action steps at the University and unit levels, ensure that particular attention is paid to enrollment-related strategies, including significant and sustained attention to the development and refinement of strategic enrollment management best practices.

- Develop a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan that includes at a minimum benchmarks for: 1) recruitment; 2) student retention; and 3) academic and general student success.
- Review resources and resource allocation processes as well as assessing and responding to student needs.
- Assess and revise current structures and state of practice in student life and student support services (including staffing, effective programming for student engagement, health and safety considerations).
- Review the institutional vision with regard to student life in general, and the basic resource infrastructure needed to be in place and running as the University grows and enhances its student support services.
- Review advising resources, particularly with regard to students facing academic challenges. Augment academic advising by incorporating developmental advising strategies to assist students with issues such as transitioning to college.

Target date for preliminary enrollment plan: January 31, 2014 (to be tied to and integrated with the University strategic plan).

**Action Step 1.5:** Translate updated University strategic plan to unit (academic and organizational) levels.

Each Vice-President, Dean and administrator reporting to the President will be charged with taking the University strategic plan and translating its elements into localized (to the unit) goals, action steps and benchmarks for their units. The organizational charts noted above will be used as the structures to organize this work. Each unit will determine appropriate leaders and planning participants to be responsible for localized strategic planning, action step implementation, benchmarking, assessment and evaluation, incorporation of assessment/evaluative data and reports, and resource needs.

Target date for completion: May 1, 2014
**Action Step 1.6:** Determine explicit and routine organizational schedules for regular review and examination of activity and data related to implementation of the strategic plan at the University and unit levels, including:

- Short and long term action step decision making and implementation;
- Review and reinforcement of explicit connections between institutional commitments (constructs), strategic planning and decision making, and action steps;
- Necessary and appropriate fiscal decisions and budget planning to support actions and priorities; and,
- Ensuring an “assessment loop” is in place that focuses on planning, implementation, and programmatic revision at the various levels of the institution through regular meetings of departments, committees and councils (continuous review of constructs, strategic planning, actions steps, budget and resources, assessment and evaluation, programmatic adjustments)

Target date for establishing schedules and routines: January 1, 2014 (to be fully implemented and in practice across campus).

[Note: Many units on campus already have these practices in place. Attention will focus on systemic implementation and support.]

2. **Assessment and Evaluation (academic and organizational)**

In order to embody the principles espoused in Fairmont State University’s mission, vision, core values and strategic plan, faculty, staff and leadership understand that the daily work and practices of the University must be inextricably grounded in those principles. There is no more critical place where the principles must be grounded than in the ways we assess how and that our students learn, and the ways we assess and evaluate broader organizational efforts to support student learning and student life. These assessment strategies, evaluative processes and results must be embedded in all aspects of the academic mission, strategic planning, strategic decision making, and action toward those plans.

Embodying these principles requires expectations of assessment and evaluation work explicitly communicated and done in transparent ways that support a campus culture of continuous organizational learning. It requires the University to conceptualize data it needs to collect and how to use it as part of a systematic assessment plan, including the academic mission, organizational support services, and quality of student life. That data and information should be accessed and summarized to inform strategic planning and budget activities. There should be clear commitments to integrated assessment and evaluation conducted as routine, ongoing processes at all levels of the institution, done to enhance our capacity to use the results for informed programming, continuous improvements, and institutional effectiveness. We will exercise campus-wide best practices in authentic and intentional assessment for learning in courses, clinical and field components, and at the program level. These practices will be incorporated in ways that enhance teaching and learning and inform program change. These
practices must be built on evidence of shared faculty understanding of sound assessment practices. Our staff and faculty will work in organizational units that are assessed to facilitate successful student outcomes in co- and extra-curricular areas, in ways that complement the academic mission and that generate evidence that can be utilized to enhance the student experience.

The following action steps will be undertaken to enhance and ensure meaningful assessment of learning and organizational efforts and services to support the student experience at Fairmont State University:

**Action Step 2.1:** Inventory all academic programs to identify existing learning outcomes and associated assessment procedures and data. The inventory will include:

- All courses, clinical and internship components, program level (including General Studies), and college/school level outcomes;
- Identification of the archiving or management system(s) in place at the program/unit levels to house learning outcomes and organizational data and produce reports;
- Identification of existing reports produced as a result of prior data collection and analysis, with identification of any related program improvements or change decisions;

Target date for completion of inventory: December 15, 2013

**Action Step 2.2:** Establish and confirm a systematic, comprehensive, University academic assessment plan including integration of learning outcomes at all levels (course, program, college/school, University), analysis of academic results, an annual process for reporting, and an annual process for continuous improvement based on results.

- Assessment strategies will incorporate assessment of learning at the course and program levels, and will articulate evidence and methods that reflect the University’s principles expressed in the mission and vision statements and core values.
- Program level assessments will be sufficient to produce information that can be used to enhance teaching and learning, to inform program change, and set future program directions.
- Each program will be able to articulate strategies in use (or to be adopted) to archive, analyze and report results.
- Procedures and an annual calendar for assessment cycle components will be determined, with target dates for analysis of learning outcome data, reports and determination of any subsequent program changes and continuous academic program improvement.
- Elements of assessment will include:
  - Analysis of current assessment mapping;
  - Confirmation of outcomes and assessments at the course/clinical, program, and college/school levels;
Confirmation of outcomes and assessments at the college/school level;
Confirmation of outcomes and assessments at the University level;
Identification of any gaps at all levels;
Identification of benchmarks and data (ongoing and new in gaps);
Identification and implementation of archiving/analysis/reporting system; and,
Creation/continuation of assessment loops at all levels.

Target dates:
- Review of existing campus structures – December 15, 2013
- Initial plans at the program level to implement systems where not in place and identification of support system to be used – January 15, 2014
- Target date for existing structure reports and drafts for structures in development – May 15, 2014

**Action Step 2.3**: Development of assessment infrastructure and capacity (including archiving structures) across the campus, focused on the following strategic steps:

- Revise and where necessary develop course and program assessments (including General Studies) across all courses, field and clinical components, and internships;
- Revise and where necessary develop program level outcomes; and,
- Revise and where necessary develop scaffolding within programs that map learning outcomes at the course/clinical/internship level with program outcomes and University outcomes.

Target date: To be implemented as results of inventory in Action Step 2.2 are completed.

**Action Step 2.4**: Inventory all organizational units to identify existing goals, and associated assessment and evaluation procedures and data. Inventory will be completed for all administrative units and sub-units. The inventory will include:

- All units, sub-units, and organizational departments;
- Descriptions of the archiving or management system in place to house the data and produce reports.
- Existing reports produced as a result of prior data collection and analysis, with identification of any related organizational improvements or change decisions.

Target date for completion of inventory: December 15, 2013

**Action Step 2.5**: Establish processes and an annual cycle for administrative and organizational support units to engage in assessment and evaluation activities, based on a range of data sources and forms, to articulate effectiveness and engage in continuous improvement.
Units will determine on an annual basis the goals and benchmarks they will pursue to provide effective supports for the University strategic plan. Goals and benchmarks should articulate in particular how effectively the unit supports student academic success and the quality of the broader student experience.

Target dates:  
- Determination of the annual cycle structure by November 1, 2013  
- Development of preliminary unit goals and benchmarks by January 31, 2014  
- Initiation of first annual cycle on July 1, 2014

**Action Step 2.6:** Develop and implement a plan to ensure that academic assessment and assessment of the University’s organizational units inform the strategic plan, strategic decision making, budget commitments. The process will include:

- Determination of needed data sources and forms, given strategic planning (University wide and localized translations);
- Data and information generated, accessed and summarized to inform strategic planning and budget activities; and
- A routine, cyclical process at all levels of the institution to integrate assessment and evaluation results that enhance the University’s capacity to inform programming, continuous improvements, and institutional effectiveness.

Target date: Assessment components and implementation should parallel needs and structures as articulated in strategic planning at the University and unit levels. These components should be updated continuously based on strategic planning implementation and review processes.

**3. Professional development in key areas of assessment and strategic planning**

As part of the deliberations and process related to the 2012 accreditation visit and review, the University faculty recognized their need and desire for ongoing professional development and faculty support that would help to ensure success for students and the University more broadly. This interest was articulated in particular in the area of assessment for learning. Faculty recognized the need to engage in professional development that would enhance their capacity to design and use a range of assessments for learning, including performance assessments and authentic assessments.

By extension, as this capacity is built and enhanced it interfaces with the challenge to strengthen the capacity for and impact of strategic planning. These intersecting emphases on capacity building in assessment and planning also create opportunities to capitalize on opportunities to further reinforce the principles and values guiding the University’s strategic directions and the way we build participatory and transparent structures for supporting students, faculty, and staff. Transparency and participatory processes build engagement and ownership of process and outcomes, and reflect and demonstrate principles to which the University is committed. The action steps that follow are efforts that will enhance the work of the University, and do so in
ways that value participatory decision making, collaborative strategy, and empowered faculty and staff, who in turn create professional cultures that empower students.

Action Step 3.1: The University will create and support structures for faculty and staff professional development in the design, implementation and analysis of assessment for learning. This will include:

- Design and implementation of sound assessment practices and tools for courses, clinical and internship components, and program level assessments that reflect the University’s principles as expressed in the mission and vision statements, core values, and strategic plan;
- Design and implementation of structures for assessment of learning, including aggregation of data, analysis, and implementation of program revisions based on results;
- Support for faculty in developing strategies to address gaps in learning identified through assessment; and
- Identification and recognition of best practices in assessment for all levels of assessment (i.e. courses, clinical and internship components, program assessment).

Target date: Preliminary plan for structural support by January 1, 2014
Identification and implementation of immediate professional development activities by October 15, 2013 (first campus-wide activities in place by Faculty Development Week in January 2014)

Action Step 3.2: Create, support, and sustain a core group of faculty from each college and school who will support capacity building for faculty and staff with colleges and schools.

The group will work as a “Critical Friends Group” (CFG) to collaborate with academic leadership (Deans, Provost) to provide guidance to campus-wide efforts related to implementation, and revision of learning outcomes and assessments through a “continuous improvement” structure. Each college and school will identify faculty members who will be willing to serve as members of the CFG. This team will be responsible for working with each other to focus on capacity building within academic units relative to assessment of learning. (Creation and the ongoing work of this team will be closely coordinated with an initiative already underway in the Faculty Senate to support faculty efforts with assessment. This may include the Senate initiative serving as the leadership of this function if Senate leadership and faculty deem it appropriate.)

Target date for identification of CFG: September 30, 2013

Action Step 3.3: The University will create and support mechanisms to provide faculty and staff professional development in the design, implementation, and analysis of assessment for the effectiveness of organizational support units. This will include:
• Design and implementation of assessment practices and tools for benchmarking components of strategic planning, articulating organizational goals, gathering evidence of effectiveness, and analyzing and reporting results;
• Identification of key people within each organizational unit who will engage in professional development and provide collegial leadership for capacity building within units; and
• Providing faculty and staff with adequate, ongoing professional development in the design and use of effective assessment strategies for their units’ responsibilities, providing feedback to colleagues, and setting targets for improvement.

Target date: Preliminary plan for structural support by January 1, 2014
Identification and implementation of immediate professional development activities by October 15, 2013 (first campus-wide activities in place by Faculty Development Week in January 2014)

**Action Step 3.4:** The University will create and support structures for faculty and staff professional development in the design and implementation of strategic planning, decision-making and action steps. This will include:

• Design and implementation of sound strategic planning and implementation practices that reflect the University’s principles as expressed in the mission and vision statements, core values, and strategic plan;
• Design and implementation of structures to support strategic planning and implementation, including setting goals and benchmarks, aggregation of data, analysis, and implementation of planning adjustments based on results;

Target date: Preliminary plan for structural support by January 1, 2014
Identification and implementation of immediate professional development activities by October 15, 2013 (first campus-wide activities in place by Faculty Development Week in January 2014)

**Action Step 3.5:** Create, support and sustain a core group of faculty and staff from each organizational unit who will support capacity building in University strategic planning and implementation at the University and unit levels.

The group will work as a “leadership council” to collaborate with University and unit leadership to provide guidance and support to campus-wide efforts in strategic planning and implementation. Vice-Presidents, unit leadership (including Deans in Academic Affairs), and faculty leadership will identify representatives from each unit who will serve as members of the leadership council. This team will be responsible for working with each other to focus on capacity building within organizational units relative to strategic planning.

Target date for identification of the leadership council: October 15, 2013
4. Building support and consensus for strategic planning, assessment, and University success.

The following action steps reflect challenges and opportunities raised in the accreditation process that can serve to strengthen the overall work of Fairmont State University. These action steps reflect our commitment to build a greater sense of coherency and cohesion among all our stakeholders around the core values we articulate as our University identity. They represent commitments the University can make as part of working assumptions to achieve positive results in action steps already presented, and enhance the likelihood of sustained and ongoing success for the University. They should be treated as working assumptions as the University pursues all of its strategic directions.

**Action Step 4.1:** Engage faculty leadership by ensuring regular participation by faculty as representative of the central academic mission of the University.

- Ensure ongoing deliberation and discussion in the Faculty Senate and faculty governance structure for planning, revision and implementation of action steps articulated in this report and the broader strategic activity of the University.

- Ensure that Action Step 1.5 is built on authentic, strategic participation by faculty at the program, department, and college/school levels across the University.

**Action Step 4.2:** Engage students in ways that promote student responsibility for learning and quality of campus life to the greatest degree possible.

Representatives from student organizations and students at large should be expected to provide important input into shaping the assessment process, increasing response rates, evaluating assessment information, and in engaging in conversations about ways to improve teaching and learning, and the quality of the student experience. This input and participation can and should occur at the program, college/school, organizational unit, and University levels. (As deemed appropriate by key faculty and academic leadership, this function may be integrated into program leadership and Senate structures.)

**Action Step 4.3:** Engage the public through dissemination of information about strategic planning, assessment for learning, and assessment of organizational effectiveness.

- Make summaries of reports on assessment of learning and assessments of organizational effectiveness available to the public through strategic efforts to engage constituents in the work of the University and its successes and challenges.

- Include program learning outcomes in hard copy and digital publications (e.g. catalogues and web sites).

- Engage the broader community in continuous improvement strategies for assessment of learning by asking them to provide information concerning the qualities of University students who are engaged with the community in academic, service, and extra-curricular activities.
• Involve alumni in assessment of learning (e.g. observe student presentations, comment on student characteristics, review student performance) and in assessment of organizational units and services that impact the quality of student life and student success.

• Create and support program advisory councils as potentially valuable for assessment of student academic achievement, and as an avenue by which professionals can continually improve programs.

**Action Step 4.4:** Identify and secure internal and external resources to support University efforts with strategic planning, action steps, assessment, enrollment management, and continuous improvement.

• As part of strategic planning the University will develop a comprehensive plan with key priorities and benchmarks translated into “campaign readiness” strategies to provide a strong foundation for using fund-raising and development to propel the University to the next level of excellence.

• The University will continue to convene a budget planning committee for review of fiscal priorities, budget allocations, and strategic resource investments that can position the University for excellence.

• The University will aggressively pursue external funds to support matching and supplemental funds (in conjunction with base budget funds) to support:
  
  o Academic and organizational unit strategic plan action steps;
  
  o Innovative and pilot initiatives that focus on elements of strategic planning;
  
  o Faculty and staff professional development in key areas of assessment of learning, organizational effectiveness, and strategic planning and implementation.
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<tr>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
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| November 1, 2013    | **Action Step 2.5:** Establish processes and an annual cycle for administrative and organizational support units to engage in assessment and evaluation activities, based on a range of data sources and forms, to articulate effectiveness and engage in continuous improvement.  
Determination of the annual cycle structure  
Development of preliminary unit goals and benchmarks  
Initiation of first annual cycle |
| January 31, 2014    | **Action Step 2.1:** Inventory all academic programs to identify existing, identified learning outcomes and associated assessment procedures and data. |
| July 1, 2014        | **Action Step 2.3:** Development of assessment infrastructure and capacity (including archiving structures) across the Fairmont State campus |
| December 15, 2013   | **Action Step 1.2:** Affirm (and edit and revise as necessary) Fairmont State University’s mission statement, vision statement and core values as constructs and language driving strategic planning, decision making and resource commitments. |
| December 15, 2013   | **Action Step 2.4:** Inventory all organizational units to identify existing, identified goals and associated assessment or evaluation procedures and data. Inventory will be completed for all administrative and support units. |
| December 15, 2013; ongoing | **Action Step 2.2:** Establish and confirm a systematic, comprehensive, University academic assessment plan including integration of learning outcomes at all levels (course, program, college/school, University), analysis of academic results, an annual process for reporting, and an annual process for continuous improvement based on results.  
Review of existing campus structures  
Initial plans at the program level to implement systems where not in place and identification of support system to be used  
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Determination of the annual cycle structure  
Development of preliminary unit goals and benchmarks  
Initiation of first annual cycle |
<p>| January 2014        | Re-start search process for VP of Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness |
| January 31, 2014    | <strong>Action Step 1.3:</strong> Review, revise and adjust as needed, and confirm the <em>Fairmont State University Strategic Plan Update: Redefining Our Future</em> (Sept. 2010) |
| January 31, 2014    | <strong>Action Step 1.4:</strong> Focus particular attention on enrollment by strengthening strategies and results for recruitment, retention, and student success; Target date for preliminary enrollment plan: (to be tied to and integrated with the University strategic plan. |</p>
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