

Provost's Report to the Faculty August 2016

This year's report is broken into two sections. The first section is devoted to some key issues that I want to share with the faculty as a whole to ensure that this information is available as we begin a new academic year. The second section is a review of the status of the various action items for the 2015-2016 version of Goal One of the University's Strategic Plan. While President Heckler will be leading significant work on the Strategic Plan during the course of the next 12 months, it is worthwhile to take a quick look back at what was accomplished over the past 12 months.

Please do let me know if you have any questions that I could help to address. Thank you for all of the great work that you do. The faculty is truly the heart of this institution, and your amazing contributions to the Valpo community are the essential foundation for all that we do. I cannot thank you enough, but, again, thank you.

SECTION ONE: Focus Areas Going Into the Fall Semester, 2016

Calendar

The Calendar Task Force has begun its work and I look forward to learning where this discussion will lead. As I noted at the Fall Faculty Workshop, the work of the task force is very open-ended at this point. The purpose of the task force is to look at the academic calendar, and the larger calendar of the University, as a strategic tool that can help us to better serve our students, and better facilitate a strong, positive work environment for faculty and staff. A well-conceived calendar can have a significant positive impact on the learning experience for students and the work environment for faculty and staff. By taking a step back and thinking carefully about the overall structure of the calendar, we can determine how the different facets of a calendar work together to support, or, frankly, inhibit, an excellent teaching and learning experience for students, faculty, and staff. As an essential part of this review, the task force will consider the appropriate process for developing a calendar on a yearly basis, and will provide recommendations regarding that process to me.

Also, as I mentioned at the Fall Faculty Workshop, the task force was provided with at least two "model calendars." These models were provided to the task force as a basis for in-depth discussion and review. These models are in no way meant to constrain the discussion process or dictate a potential outcome. In fact, I strongly encourage those of you who are interested to provide your own ideas about a potential calendar for Valpo. Your input could be a detailed description of a complete academic calendar, and how that calendar would play out on a year-to-year basis. Or, your input could be as simple as a discussion of one or two key components that you believe should definitely be in a calendar at Valpo. Or, your input could be anything in between. The bottom line is that the richer the input that is provided by all of us, the better the outcome of this process will be.

Again, I have no pre-conceived notion of what the final outcome of the task force's work will be. But, I do believe that we will benefit from a thoughtful review of our calendar, a full discussion of why we do what we do, and from an opportunity to intentionally conceive how best to leverage our calendar for our students, faculty, and staff. Please do let me know if you have any questions or concerns. You can provide input to the task force by contacting Rick Gillman, Stan Zygmunt, the chair of the task force, or me. Thank you.

Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan Process

As you are probably aware, President Heckler is leading a major review of the University Strategic Plan during the course of the next year, or so. A key step in this overall process is a summit that will be occurring at the end of September during which individuals from across campus will have the opportunity to provide input about the content of a revised Strategic Plan. At the Fall Faculty Workshop, key information was gathered during the various parallel sessions and this input will be carried forward as part of the Strategic Plan revision process. Of course, the report of the Goal One of the Strategic Plan Task Force, which worked during the 2015-2016 academic year, will continue to be a key part of the conversation about the revised Strategic Plan, and the good work reflected in that report will continue to influence the nature of the new Strategic Plan.

Given the early stage of this process for crafting a revised Strategic Plan, it is important that all of us continue to take advantage of opportunities to provide input that could help to shape the revised Strategic Plan. Please do plan to attend the summit that will occur at the end of September so that your voice can be heard at an early point in this process. If you are unable to take part in that summit, please provide input to your dean, to anyone in the Provost's Office, or to Randa Duvick and Pat Sullivan, who are faculty representatives on the Strategic Planning Committee. The process of revising the Strategic Plan has already benefitted greatly from the input of faculty, including the report from the Goal One of the Strategic Plan Task Force. I ask that we all take advantage of every opportunity to provide input regarding the development of a revised Strategic Plan. Now is an excellent time at which to provide input to this important work. Please do let me know if you have any questions about this process.

Law School Update

There continues to be much activity at the Law School, and so a short update is appropriate. The following items are worth noting:

- With a goal to enroll at least 75 students for fall 2016, the Law School welcomed a class of 104 at the beginning of the semester, 102 full time and 2 part time. The size of this class is encouraging, especially given that the discount rate held at a level that had been modeled with respect to financial sustainability.
- The credentials of the entering class are up compared to the last three classes. The credentials of the incoming class are well-grouped, indicating that it will be possible to effectively target teaching and learning experiences to the needs and abilities of the class.

- We continue in discussions with the ABA regarding a number of issues, but, particularly our admissions policies and practices. These discussions will likely continue to be ongoing as we work to ensure that we are continuously compliant with all ABA standards and expectations.

In addition to the above items, it should be noted that work is moving forward with respect to strengthening the integration of the Law School more fully into the operations and programs of the University more generally. A task force will be working over the course of the coming year in order to identify both strategies and tactics to enhance the integration of the Law School within the University. This task force is being chaired by David Cleveland, and membership includes faculty members and deans from across campus. In addition to this task force, conversations are occurring among faculty members from the Law School and the College of Business seeking to identify cooperative program areas. If you have any questions, or would like to provide input regarding the work of this task force, please contact David Cleveland or me. We will be happy to pass your ideas and/or questions along to the task force, or other appropriate individual.

The University Writing Program and Writing Intensive Courses, or WIC

As you are aware, a decision was made last spring to delay the full implementation of the WIC requirement for our students until the 2017-2018 academic year. This decision was based on the input of key faculty members with respect to the University Writing Program, and was driven by a concern regarding our ability to staff the full number of required WIC sections.

Both President Heckler and I remain fully committed to implementing the WIC requirement starting in the 2017-2018 academic year. Individuals in the Office of the Provost have been working, and will continue to work, closely with deans, particularly the Dean of Arts and Sciences, department chairs, the University Director of Writing, and individual faculty members in order to ensure that the WIC requirement is fully staffed, funded, and launched just under a year from now. The implementation of the WIC requirement is a key aspect of the overall University Writing Program, and we look forward to your support and insight as we prepare for and launch the WIC requirement next year.

SECTION TWO: Progress on Strategic Plan Action Items, 2015-2016

The current status of all action items associated with Goal One of the Strategic Plan, the goal associated with academic programs, is provided below. In each case, the action item is in regular font, and the status of the item is in *italics* font.

Action 1.1.1: Valparaiso University will actively develop programs that seek to use the newly-available space in Chicago-Hyde Park even as it pursues other opportunities to offer Valpo degrees.

Advance current programs to a sustainable level – Provost's Office.

**This action item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan and so no significant progress was made on this item during the past year.*

Action 1.1.2: Valparaiso will develop an all-encompassing strategy to serve adult students off campus.

**This action item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan and so no significant progress was made on this item during the past year.*

Action 1.1.3: Valparaiso University will work to develop innovative-go-to-market communications and marketing strategies in support of innovative initiatives – AVP IMC.

**This action item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan and so no significant progress was made on this item during the past year.*

Action 1.1.4: Establish clear, rigorous processes for evaluating all graduate programs, including external reviewers, and select at least two programs for initial review – Graduate School Dean.

**While grayed out, significant progress was made on this action item in preparation for the HLC visit in 2017.*

Action 1.2.1: Valparaiso University will develop and initiate at least two new undergraduate programs that evince both interdisciplinary innovation and great market potential.

**While grayed out, new programs have been developed in areas such as aviation, bioengineering, data science and statistics.*

Action 1.2.2: Valparaiso University will collaborate with other members of the New American Colleges and Universities (NAC&U) to enrich undergraduate education at the University. Valparaiso University will work with four other NAC&U universities to develop a pilot “Study Away” program that will enable students from one of the five campuses readily to complete attractive academic programs not offered on their own campus through a semester of study at another of the five campuses – Provost’s Office.

**While grayed out, Valparaiso is now participating in the study away program through NAC&U. Valpo is offering study away programs in Geography and Meteorology.*

Action 1.3.1: Valparaiso University will institute measures to ensure the quality of its students’ writing skills.

**Significant progress was made with respect to the WID (Writing in the Disciplines) program and the WIC (Writing Intensive Course) program. The change over in the Director of Writing position was addressed effectively, and Kelly Belanger will provide strong leadership for the entire writing program, including the WIC and WID programs.*

Action 1.3.2: Valparaiso University will fund an additional \$4M endowment to support the University Director of Writing position and a speaker/resident fellow series on writing – VP Advancement, August 2016.

**A donor for the additional \$4 million to endow the writing program has not yet been identified.*

Action 1.3.3: Valparaiso University will establish campus-wide standards for challenging capstone projects that include both a written and an oral or performance requirement. Then, the Provost's Office will work with individual colleges and departments to design appropriate capstone experiences within their programs, with the long-term goal of requiring this experience for all undergraduate students at Valparaiso University – Associate Provost.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.3.6: Collaborate with Christ College/CORE faculty and Freshman Program/CORE directors to develop and implement information literacy instruction within CC 115 and CORE 115, articulate outcomes, and deliver faculty development work on integrating information literacy instruction within the course – Dean of the Library, June 2016.

**Completed, with ongoing support provided.*

Action 1.4.1: Pre- and post-departure assessment measures will be in place for long-term study abroad students – Assistant Provost for International Affairs, May 2016.

**Post-departure assessment measure is being done for Spring 2016 study-abroad students in the fall of 2016. Pre-departure assessments will be done for Spring 2017 study-abroad students in November of 2016. These assessments will continue longitudinally going forward. So, the structure is in place and assessment is occurring.*

Action 1.4.2: Valparaiso University will enrich language study in areas of strategic priority, guided by our present strengths and our best judgment of future educational demands and opportunities.

Establish a Chinese Language major – Dean of Arts & Sciences and Assistant Provost for International Affairs, June 2017.

**This item was delayed as we sought to ensure that we have a sustainable financial model for adding this major.*

Action 1.4.5: Establish Arabic language study program and/or a Middle-Eastern Studies Program – International Studies Department and Dean of Arts & Sciences, May 2016.

Establish Global Studies Major – International Studies Department; Dean of Arts & Sciences; Assistant Provost for International Affairs.

**Financial modeling and market analysis caused us to step back and reconsider the best model for these programs. Work is ongoing regarding this initiative, seeking to ensure a sustainable model.*

Action 1.4.8: Ensure that 50% of Valparaiso University's domestic undergraduate students, measured as percentage of graduating class, have studied abroad starting with the 2020 graduating class; as an intermediate goal, ensure that 40% of the 2016 graduating class have studied abroad – Assistant Provost for International Affairs, June 2017.

**Work is ongoing, with good progress occurring.*

Action 1.5.1: As part of the University's reaccreditation process for the Higher Learning Commission, revise the advising system – Associate Provost and Deans, July 2017.

**This work has made significant progress, with new advising models in place in multiple colleges. Additional work is ongoing, as funding allows. We currently are unable to fund the final advising positions that have been sought.*

Action 1.5.4: Review, assess, and make more vigorous and centralized the process of determining international undergraduate and graduate students' English language proficiency before their arrival on campus, testing their proficiency upon arrival at V.U., and supporting their progress during their time at V.U. – Assistant Provost for International Affairs, June 2016

**Significant progress has been made, including discussions with Interlink and the issuing of an RFP for ESL instruction.*

Action 1.5.5: Create the International Graduate Student Advisory Board (IGSSA) to organize events and take other steps (working in conjunction with the Office for International Programs) to promote intercultural communication, interaction, and friendships among graduate students from different parts of the world – Dean of Graduate School, December 2015.

**This item has been effectively completed through the reconstitution of the Graduate Student Advisory Council, or GSAC, which represents all graduate students in all graduate programs. Three other groups/programs for graduate students also help to support the implementation of this action item.*

Action 1.5.6: Explore and potentially implement an approach to more fully and effectively integrate all student academic support services – Assistant Provost for Inclusion & Director of ASC, August 2016.

**This work is moving forward and the new administrative structure is housed under the new Executive Director for Student Success, and is reflected in the creation of the CODASC, or Council of Directors of Academic Support Centers. Ongoing work is continuing.*

Action 1.6.1: Valparaiso University will create a study group of faculty and administrators to determine the best means for achieving scientific literacy among its students by exploring

options within the curriculum (based on the definitions and assessment measures that were approved by the General Education Committee).

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.6.2: Valparaiso University will explore partnerships between the STEM disciplines and those in the Social Sciences and Humanities to develop courses, programs, or projects that investigate the connections between STEM and issues like public policy, human impacts on the environment, religion, and ethics.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.7.1: Valparaiso University will increase substantially student participation in research, including both faculty/student collaboration and student-led projects – June 2016.

**Progress has been made in increasing participation. More work is ongoing with respect to how best to measure participation, and the appropriate metrics needed in order to ensure that we are achieving the desired outcomes.*

Action 1.8.3: Develop a plan to effectively use “The Welcome Project” to enhance appreciation and support of diversity on the campus and within the community – Assistant Provost for Inclusion, August 2016.

**Work is ongoing, with good progress made.*

Action 1.8.4: Work with the leadership on campus, in the city, and county to develop a protocol for responding to threatening and harassing incidents – Assistant Provost for Inclusion, June 2016.

**This item was completed with the implementation of the new Bias Incident Reporting and Response Structure.*

Action 1.8.7: Create an integrated committee structure that incorporates all of the current diversity and inclusion initiatives into one working unit that communicates effectively across the university – Assistant Provost for Inclusion, August 2016.

**This item was completed with the creation and implementation of the CIVC, Council for an Inclusive Valpo Community.*

Action 1.9.1: Continue to track recruitment and retention of faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups – Assistant Provost for Inclusion. August 2016.

**This item was completed for 2016-2017. This monitoring will continue going forward.*

Action 1.9.2: Develop robust support mechanisms and/or mentorship programs to facilitate the success of faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups – Assistant Provost for Inclusion, May 2016.

**Work on this item is continuing and is ongoing.*

Action 1.9.3: Review and enhance the Diversity Advocates Program – Assistant Provost for Inclusion, June 2016.

**Work on this item was started and is ongoing.*

Action 1.11.1: The Law School will achieve greater integration, as appropriate, with the rest of the University through initiatives in many areas, including: a) financial management; b) enrollment management; c) technology management and support; d) curricular offerings and programs; e) faculty teaching assignments; and f) space utilization – Provost's Office and the Dean of the Law School, June 2016.

Action 1.11.2: The Law School will develop and implement a bar-passage program, beginning in May 2014 that is designed to achieve a pass rate, for members of each graduating class taking the Illinois or Indiana bar examination for the first time, which exceeds each state's pass rate, as reported annually to the ABA – Dean of School of Law, June 2016.

Action 1.11.3: The Law School will achieve placement rates for J.D. graduates that meet the national average, as defined by the ABA – Dean of the Law School, June 2016.

Action 1.11.4: The Law School will develop new models for legal education, including diversification beyond the J.D. degree and through partnerships with the other academic units at the University – Provost's Office and Dean of the Law School, August 2016.

**Action items 1.11.1, 1.11.2, 1.11.3 and 1.11.4 have been integrated into the overall effort to achieve a sustainable law school. Excellent progress has been made in regard to all of these actions items, and ongoing work will occur. These action items are summarized in the expectations of the Board of Directors that we will have a financially sustainable law school, that is compliant with ABA expectations, and that is well integrated with the university as a whole. These action items will continue to be addressed.*

Action 1.12.1: Establish professorships in all of the colleges that enable selected faculty to focus on pedagogical innovation on behalf of the entire faculty of those colleges (three in A&S and one in each of the other colleges) and to work together as a group under the Executive Director of Institutional Innovation to encourage and promote academic innovation, including strategies that adapt evolving technologies to teaching and learning – Provost's Office, Vice President for Advancement.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.12.3: Establish and convene an internal and external advisory board, to include members of the Pedagogical Innovation faculty, that will advise the ED of Institutional Innovation to focus on pedagogical innovation on behalf of the faculty of those colleges, and work as a group with both the Valparaiso Institute for Teaching and Learning (VITAL) and the ED of Institutional Innovation to encourage and promote academic innovation, including strategies that adapt evolving technologies to teaching and learning – Executive Director of Institutional Innovation and the Provost’s Office.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.13.1: Valparaiso University will create a study group of faculty and administrators to identify academic programs that both could be completed reasonably in three years and that have market potential in this format – Provost’s Office.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.13.2: Create, as a pilot for a 3+3 BA-BS/JD program, a 3 + 3 collaborative degree program between Christ College and the Valparaiso University School of Law - Christ College Dean, Law School Dean.

**While this item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, some preliminary discussions have occurred over the past year.*

Action 1.14.1: Valparaiso University will build communications programs to achieve stronger international recognition and reputation in the arts through its music events on campus and abroad – Assistant Provost for International Affairs.

**This item had been grayed out in this version of the strategic plan, and so no significant progress was made on this item over the past year.*

Action 1.15.1 The HLC reaffirmation of accreditation working group will complete a rough draft of the assurance argument, continue ensuring that required data is being collected, and move forward with the assumed practices and federal compliance pieces of the overall process. Any significant shortcomings will be identified and an action plan to address that shortcoming will be developed and implemented – Provost’s Office, June 2016.

**Appropriate progress has been made with respect to the HLC reaffirmation of accreditation process. Four of five criteria have draft language for the assurance argument, and the final criterion should have a rough draft by the end of August 2016.*

Action 1.16.1: Enroll in the HLC’s Persistence and Completion Academy to take advantage of its four-year program support – Provost’s Office, June 2016.

**We chose not to enroll in the HLC's Persistence and Completion Academy, as we focused efforts on the Retention Task Force, which created tactical and strategic initiatives around improved retention. So, this item was completed by an alternate approach.*

Action 1.16.2: Create and implement a multi-day, graduate student orientation program that will focus on transition issues and student success skills – Dean of the Graduate School, September 2015.

**This item was successfully completed in August of 2015, and the action will continue going forward.*

Action 1.16.3: Determine if a third-party software application or support program will help us to retain students and assure their success – VP for Student Affairs and the Provost's Office, March 2016.

**This item was successfully completed. A comprehensive software package was not purchased. The new Executive Director for Student Success will review focused software support for retention activities on an ongoing basis.*

Action 1.16.4: Review internal data collection, generation, and dissemination to ensure that we are tracking key data points and sharing this data with the appropriate individuals on campus – Provost's Council, March 2016.

**The Retention Task Force completed an extensive review of data collection, generation, and dissemination during 2015-2016. The Executive Director for Student Success will be responsible for coordinating data generation, analysis, and sharing related to retention, and will continue this effort going forward in a sustainable model.*

Action 1.17.1: Convene a task force that will review the current university learning outcomes and make recommendations for changes to the faculty and administration – Office of the Provost, May 2016.

**Completed May 2016.*

Action 1.17.2: Articulate what is meant by “the Valpo experience” for undergraduate students, graduate students, online students, and continuing education students – IMC, EM, Advancement, SA, Council of Deans, October 2016.

**This work has been integrated into the new process for the review of the Strategic Plan. Rather than have two parallel efforts, all efforts in regard to this action will be carried out within the review of the Strategic Plan.*

Action 1.18.1: Develop and implement a communication plan regarding new program development targeting the appropriate constituencies – Associate Provost, October 2015.

**Rick Gillman implemented this action step during the Fall Semester 2015, and ongoing communication is continuing under his direction.*

Action 1.18.2: Develop a workshop or other appropriate venues that explain the new academic program development process to faculty and relevant staff – Associate Provost, October 2015.

**Rick Gillman implemented this action item in October of 2015. The workshop will continue to be offered, as appropriate.*

Action 1.18.3: Develop mechanisms to ensure that the marketing of all new academic programs is built into their financial plans and implemented upon program approval – VP for EM, December 2015.

**This action item has been completed. All new academic programs must have marketing included in the financial models for the new programs before they will be reviewed for approval.*

Respectfully submitted,

Mark L. Biermann
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs