



Plattsburgh State

Academic Plan

January 2003 – July 2006

I. Overview

This plan has been drafted over the course of the last year by the Deans' Cabinet, drawing information from a variety of other college units and extra-college sources. It includes a description of academic programs targeted for addition or expansion, as well as other programs to be explored. The plan also describes other initiatives, either underway or being contemplated, to strengthen the academic offerings of the institution. The plan also describes possible consolidations of programs in order to improve the college's overall academic quality.

The plan is based on the following premises:

1. Plattsburgh State University needs to be more competitive in its marketplace. Although at one time PSU had a niche in certain areas, such as environmental sciences, a high quality business program and one of the strongest teacher education programs in SUNY, in many instances other SUNY institutions have caught up with us. For example, several other institutions now offer one or another form of environmental studies and our being the first SUNY college to obtain AACSB accreditation for our business program was quickly followed by several other SUNY colleges obtaining the same accreditation.
2. Strengthening our teacher education programs was identified in 2002-03 as a major institutional priority for PSU. It will remain a priority for several years. The program will have its NCATE accreditation site visit in fall 2004 and must have external accreditation by December 31, 2006. In addition, the program will need more resources, particularly faculty, and a heightened integration of teacher education and arts and sciences faculty. There has been some progress

on these matters, with approval of searches for an English-Secondary Education position and a School Psychology position with some teaching responsibility in Educational Psychology, and with the creation of a Teacher Education Council consisting of teacher education and appropriate Arts & Sciences chairs. These efforts will need to continue. With approximately 20 percent of our undergraduate enrollment and well over 50 percent of our graduate enrollment in teacher education, the success of our teacher education programs is critical to the future of PSU.

3. Given Plattsburgh State's mission of preparing students "for a wide range of professional careers," including high quality professional programs informed by the liberal arts and strong liberal arts programs, there needs to be a careful review of all our programs for us to be assured that they are of the highest possible quality. For professional preparation programs this means that the programs should have appropriate professional accreditation. If the program does not have the academic and fiscal resources to obtain that accreditation, then the college must choose to either strengthen the program or to move its faculty and resources into another program.
4. The growth mode that characterized Plattsburgh State in the late 90s and beginning of the 2000s is probably not appropriate for the next three-year period. Given limited state funding and a competitive marketplace, simply adding programs and options in the assumption that these will lead to increased enrollment and funding is not a wise path for the college to pursue. Since growth is not likely, PSU needs to concentrate more on defining its niche within SUNY and within the northeast. In addition, the college will need to review its selectivity standards in light of SUNY's increasing emphasis on selectivity in undergraduate admissions. This issue will be addressed in the college Enrollment Management Plan.
5. Since simply growing programs is no longer economically feasible or academically desirable, some programs should be consolidated or reconfigured. One example of this to be discussed later in this report is the potential closing of our four-year adolescence education programs and having the college focus on a

five-year combined bachelor's/MST program for all adolescence education students.

6. Retrenchment is the last resort for the college to deal with budget shortfalls. While not all current academic programs will continue, the college intends to move faculty and staff from closed programs into related areas of expertise and continue to employ them. However, serious budgetary limitations do make retrenchment a possibility if all other means of balancing the budget have failed.
7. This academic plan needs to be congruent with other plans on the campus, including the Enrollment Management Plan, the Diversity Plan, the branding and marketing efforts, and the Strategic Plan, and with the Plattsburgh/System Administration Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Since the college intends during the 2003-04 academic year to create a new strategic plan, this academic plan should be one of the key building blocks for that strategic plan.
8. Plattsburgh and Clinton County have been identified as the northern terminus of New York State's "Tech Valley," a 17-county area along New York's eastern border that starts in Dutchess and Ulster Counties and stretches to the Canadian border. (See Albany Times Union Advertising Supplement, 13 April 2003.) This region has been identified as an area for potential significant growth in the high tech sector. Most of the potential growth is likely to be in the Capital District region because of significant high tech investments associated with SUNY Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. While PSU is neither by history nor mission an institution with a strong base in technology education, we will need to be sensitive to possible cooperative efforts with institutions having programs in the technology sector. These institutions include Clinton Community College and Clarkson University. PSU also needs to be sensitive to the fact that high tech industries often create a demand for many skilled workers in fields other than high technology, including writing, graphic design, video communication, and general management, to cite a few examples. PSU needs to monitor these developments and anticipate ways in which it can contribute to and profit from them.
9. PSU will continue to maintain its core academic values while at the same time being sensitive to the educational needs of the state and the region and to market

realities in higher education. One example of this will be the increased focus on our site at Adirondack Community College, since that site in Glens Falls is part of a major population center with significant needs for enhanced professional accreditation of individuals in the region, particularly in the area of teacher education. The college also needs to take advantage of its location in the New York-Quebec transportation corridor. The college's strength in the study of Canada, both in the Center for the Study of Canada and the independent Canadian Studies program, needs to be reviewed for additional possibilities. The Center for the Study of Canada is already proposing an ambitious grant-funded project in the Study of Quebec.

This draft academic plan is to be shared broadly across the campus in late spring and early fall 2003 and will also be presented to the interim president for his/her review. As indicated earlier, the plan is not only to guide development of curriculum over the next three years, but also intended to be one major component of the building of the college's new strategic plan.

II. Programs Moving Through Approval Process

In response to the need for new and revised academic programs at Plattsburgh State, several initiatives are already underway and moving through the approval process. A Master's in Mental Health Counseling is moving forward now that the State of New York has allowed for Master's certification in mental health counseling. The college is also developing a program in Environmental Studies as an option in the Geography major to take advantage of the interest in interdisciplinary studies, including studies in the humanities and social sciences. Potsdam has already proposed a major in Environmental Studies in this region. In addition, the Master's in Education in Curriculum and Instruction is being revised in keeping with changes in teacher certification requirements and the expectations of NCATE. Furthermore, a committee established to study the possibility of combining undergraduate and graduate education has proposed creating a five-year Bachelor's/MST in Secondary Education to consolidate resources now being used for both the MST program and undergraduate programs in secondary education, as well as to take advantage of the new state requirement that teachers must obtain a Master's degree within three years of having obtained the Bachelor's degree to be fully certified in New York State. This five-year Bachelor's/MST program has the

encouragement of SUNY officials and will place PSU at the leading edge in terms of development of teacher education programs among SUNY institutions.

III. Possible New Programs

The college is exploring other new programs as well. One of these would be further development of the Individualized Studies major to increase its visibility and attractiveness to students. With the reorganization of the Center for Lifelong Learning, responsibility for Individualized Studies has been moved to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. In addition, the arts and science faculty are exploring the possibility of a program in Ecology.

Furthermore, the college is now in discussion with both Clarkson and the University of Vermont on creating a joint Master's in computer science to enhance career possibilities at the graduate level for computer science professionals within this region. There are many questions in regard to this potential program, but we are convinced that this option is worth further examination. Computer Science is an area targeted for growth in the MOU, and in this path may offer a realistic way to support that growth.

A proposal is also being developed to create an Expeditionary Studies Program, which is an outgrowth of the Adirondack Experience Program. This proposed major has its origins and focus in strategic planning in the late 1990s which called for an increasing emphasis on the development of the attractiveness of the region as a major priority for PSU.

In a recent series of joint meetings between the Council of Institutional Programs, which consists of directors of college-wide interdisciplinary programs that report to the Provost, and the Deans' Cabinet, the following program initiatives were identified as being worth further exploration:

- Global Studies/International Studies as a new major
- Leadership Studies as either a new major or a certificate program
- Healthcare Management as a new major

- Diversity Studies as a credit or non-credit certificate program or as a thread in other programs.

The development of programs in several of these areas was anticipated in the MOU.

In the field of health care, which has been an area of considerable discussion of possible new programs in the last few years, other programs have also been suggested by local health care providers. These included a Master's in Nursing and a Physician's Assistant program. A consultant in the health care field will be brought to campus in late spring or summer 2003 to advise the college on possible new ventures in this area.

The School of Business and Economics (SBE) recognizes that there is a significant need for a high quality, affordable, and cost-effective graduate program in Business Administration in the North Country community. Many local businesses and firms employ a large number of employees with a Bachelor's degree in non-business areas. The SBE proposes to develop a collaborative graduate program with Marist and other colleges to meet the graduate-level continuing business education needs of experienced professionals in the region.

The goals of the joint program would be:

- To provide an affordable, student-centered and friendly graduate certificate program in Business Administration, which will be accepted as part of an MBA degree offered by an AACSB-International accredited MBA program.
- To enable professionals with non-business academic backgrounds to acquire skills and knowledge in the foundations of business studies.
- To enable accomplished professionals to acquire more skills and knowledge in the areas of leadership, entrepreneurship, and human resources management.
- To enable professionals in the region to pursue a MBA degree from an AACSB-International accredited program, built on the business foundation courses taken as part of the graduate certificate program offered by PSU.

Such a collaborative program would be an innovative way of achieving the goal established in our MOU of initiating an MBA program within five years.

IV. Other Initiatives

The college is moving ahead with the implementation of the new general education program, adopted in late 2002. This includes increased encouragement and support for learning communities. We anticipate that a sufficient number of courses will be newly created or revised to begin the program for incoming freshmen in fall 2004. Half a dozen learning communities are being planned for implementation at the same time.

Currently, the college is reviewing its distance-learning sites for the nursing program. Some of the rural sites have low enrollment and they are currently being reviewed for their viability. The college is planning to add a new distance-learning site for the nursing program in Schenectady, New York to take advantage of the interest in nursing education in the Capital District Region. The college is also offering the educational leadership program as a distance learning program effective fall 2003.

As noted earlier, one major area for potential growth for the college is at the PSU Extension Center at Adirondack Community College (ACC) in Glens Falls, New York. Glens Falls is on the northern end of the Capital District Region and is located just outside of Saratoga County, which is one of the fastest growing counties in the state of New York. The ACC site currently offers the undergraduate RN to BS nursing program via distance learning, the various master's programs in education, and the MALS program. The extension center is being consolidated under a director, who reports directly to the Provost. The intent of this reorganization is to improve our visibility at the ACC site and to enhance overall coordination of the programs there. The college is exploring the potential for growth at ACC, particularly in the master's of education programs, as well as the possibility of offering the third- and fourth-year of selected undergraduate programs in coordination with programs with ACC. ACC has expressed interest in such possibilities in the past and these will be explored. One possible obstacle is that if we were to add third- and fourth-year undergraduate programs at ACC, the college might have to seek approval for a branch campus site, which is a lengthy and extended process.

Other initiatives include the possibility of greater use of the cohort concept in graduate programs, where a group of students enter the program at the same time, take a series of courses together, and graduate together. The advantages of cohort programs are that they tend to be more cost-effective and there is greater group cohesion among the students in the program, as well as a greater ability to track the academic development of those students. Given our limited resources, the cohort concept needs to be further explored as an appropriate model for graduate programs on this campus and at ACC.

With the reorganization of the Center for lifelong Learning, responsibility for the interdisciplinary MALS program has been moved to the Dean of Business and Economics. Most of the students in the MALS program have chosen a concentration in Administration and Leadership and take most of their credits in the area of business. This violates AACSB accreditation standards, which require less than 50 percent of any program not included in the accreditation to be comprised of business courses. The existing program endangers the SBE accreditation. The college plans to revise MALS curriculum to comply with AACSB standards and to offer a truly less-than-half business and more-than-half liberal arts curriculum. The revised curriculum will:

- Provide students in the “Administration and Leadership” concentration with an innovative degree, which would enable them to apply the first 15-credit hours of the program and a graduate certificate in management (or a related business area) and either continue with a MALS degree by taking another 18 credits of clustered liberal arts and science courses or apply the credits earned to a collaborating MBA program and continue on that path.
- Provide a platform to meet the 150-credit hours requirements of our undergraduate accounting program.
- Retain the existing MALS structure (with the exception of the Administrative and Leadership concentration) and use it as an incubator to introduce other potential graduate degree programs such as MALS with a concentration in Environmental Science.

V. Programs Being Reviewed for Possible Consolidation

Because of their overall enrollment and cost effectiveness, several programs are being reviewed for possible consolidation or other major revision. In the 2001-02 academic year, the physics and geography programs in particular were reviewed and certain changes were made to make them more sustainable in the long term. It is expected that these departments will move forward with the agreements they made with the administration in terms of creating more sustainable models for the curriculum. Other programs are being reviewed in terms of their ability to either obtain or maintain professional accreditation, as well as their economical and educational viability. No decisions have been made on any closures or consolidations of programs, but such closures or consolidations remain a possibility for the next few years. If the college expands its educational offerings in some areas while at the same time having a budget that is more or less stable or even declining in terms of overall resources, then other programs must be closed or consolidated if the college is to have enough money to both support new initiatives and maintain the strong programs that it already has. The college cannot simply grow the number of programs without weakening its overall educational enterprise given its limited resources. Discussions on the viability of various majors will inevitably continue over the next few years. These discussions are never popular, but they are inevitable.

One area where the college does intend to consolidate was mentioned earlier: replacing its four-year Bachelor's Secondary Education programs and with a five-year program, which will allow students to obtain both a Bachelor's and an MST. The Bachelor's would be in the subject area of secondary education, such as English, social studies, or math, and the MST would be a degree that gives students full certification to teach in New York State. Once this new five-year program is approved, the college intends to shut down its four-year secondary education programs. It is possible in the next few years that the college would move to a five-year model for all education programs. This would be a dramatic change from its current practice, but one that is in line with changes occurring in other states. This seems to be the future direction outlined by various New York State mandates for the preparation and full certification of teachers.

VI. Conclusion

In developing this draft plan, the Deans' Cabinet paid particular attention to the qualities of innovativeness, likely student and/or societal demand, fit with the college's mission and existing facilities and human resources, and expected costs of any program. As more concrete proposals are developed, whether for new programs, program expansion, or program consolidation, these variables must be kept in mind. This plan, like all plans, is subject to ongoing revision as conditions change and as new ideas come forward. The comments and suggestions of all members of the college community are welcome.

ljw – 5/15/03