

FOCUS: 50 TO 100 - Celebrating 50 Years and Planning the Future

With a new President and a 50th anniversary, it is an ideal time for UNLV to look back on what we have achieved in the past 50 years and focus on what we want to become in the next 50 years. In his April 2007 inauguration speech, President David Ashley offered the campus a bold vision of the university's future and called for a commitment to defining our unique identity and values that could, in turn, guide our investments and inform and improve our education and research programs. He challenged the campus to engage in a comprehensive planning process that would articulate our identity, lay out broad goals to guide us, and lead to implementation strategies to achieve those goals. We hoped that our planning efforts would:

- Create a shared understanding of our current status.
- Address major challenges and identify major opportunities.
- Build community and a common vision for UNLV.
- Enhance our educational effectiveness and improve student learning and success.
- Improve our national and international reputation and rankings.
- Establish select areas to build programmatic excellence.
- Better serve the region around us and aid economic diversification for Nevada.
- Align decision making and budgeting with our educational and research goals, aided by appropriate performance metrics.
- Increase community and legislative support.
- Gain research focus and establish a cooperative research agenda.

Thus, we launched “*Focus 50 to 100 – Planning the Future*” to create a common set of goals and to serve as a template for establishing priorities to guide our growth and improve our university. We initiated this process with informal discussions in the summer of 2007, which led to a campus wide Town Hall “kick-off” meeting in September 2007, where we critically reviewed our progress in education, research, and infrastructure; invited panels of community and university stakeholders to discuss our identity and values; and began to address our planning priorities. Our approach was to engage as many stakeholders as possible, which occurred through a website dedicated to the planning process and a series of 16 Town Hall meetings that helped us develop consensus around our identity and common values; our needs and goals for education, research, and scholarship; and our priorities for improving our operating and physical infrastructure so that we could achieve our goals.

These meetings culminated in a planning retreat held February 15, 2008, involving more than 100 community, faculty, staff, and student stakeholders, guided by our President and Provost. The results included a series of brief statements defining our identity and values, our educational goals, our research goals, and the infrastructure improvements we needed to achieve them. We also developed a comprehensive set of priorities and action steps to guide the implementation teams who will be charged with translating the plan into action and measurable results. The plan was approved by the Faculty Senate and Dean's Council and then was reviewed and approved by the Cabinet and President for submission to the Board of Regents for consideration at its June 2008 meeting. Our planning document will serve as a guide for our 2010 accreditation visit by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The plan will also guide major budget decisions, and we will ask all UNLV units to use the document as a framework for developing budget requests and resource allocations.

A series of succinct statements embodying the vision and commitments made by the university community in each of the major planning areas follows:

IDENTITY AND VALUES

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is a research institution committed to rigorous educational programs and the highest standards of a liberal education. We produce accomplished graduates who are well prepared to enter the work force or to continue their education in graduate and professional programs. Our faculty, students, and staff enthusiastically confront the challenges of economic and cultural diversification, urban growth, social justice, and sustainability. Our commitment to our dynamic region and State centrally influences our research and educational programs, which improves our local communities. Our commitment to the national and international communities insures that our research and educational programs engage both traditional and innovative areas of study and global concerns. UNLV's distinctive identity and values permeate a unique institution that brings the best of the world to our region and, in turn, produces knowledge to improve the region and world around us.

UNLV is committed to and driven by these shared values that will guide our decision making:

- High expectations for student learning and success;
- Discovery through research, scholarship, and creative activity;
- Nurturing equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment;
- Social, environmental, and economic sustainability;
- Strong, reciprocal, and interdependent relationships between UNLV and the region around us;
- An entrepreneurial, innovative, and unconventional spirit.

EDUCATION

The UNLV community is dedicated to our students' success, designing learning experiences characterized by opportunities for achievement in and out of the classroom. Students will acquire the skills, knowledge, and values needed to be successful, informed, and engaged citizens in the global community. Acquisition of such skills is measured by a comprehensive assessment process that tracks achievement and guides curriculum development. Our educational programs promote:

- Understanding of local, regional, and global connections and systems as well as the development of multi-cultural and plura-cultural competencies.
- Broad elucidation of sustainability as it impacts economic, environmental, and social concerns.
- Integrative thinking across a spectrum of disciplines.
- Substantial research, scholarly, and creative opportunities for all students.
- Diversity leadership, social justice, ethical responsibility, and civic engagement.
- The ability to understand and embrace constructive change.

Foundational Skills

As a result of their educational experience at UNLV, students will master the foundational skills and abilities required for a liberal education, allowing them to be successful in their lives and careers. Our graduating students will be:

- Intellectually competent, with the foundational skills needed for success.
- Able, as critical thinkers, to embrace complexity and abstraction.
- Appreciative of aesthetics and creative expression.
- Able to access information effectively.
- Well versed in the principles of research.
- Self-motivated, independent, life-long learners.
- Able to think independently, while still being effective in collaborative activities.
- Adaptive problem-solvers who are willing to challenge conventional wisdom.
- Accountable for their own well-being as responsible individuals who also contribute to the well-being of others and of society.
- Open to the exchange of ideas, including those from diverse and global communities.
- Capable of achieving success in their chosen fields and disciplines.

RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

UNLV is dedicated to discovery and the creation of knowledge through research, scholarship, and creative expression by its faculty and students. Recognizing that cutting edge research informs and improves teaching and

learning outcomes for undergraduate and graduate students, UNLV will draw scholars from around the world who share our values. These faculty will expand and diversify the activities of our nationally and internationally lauded scholars, enabling us to invest further in collaborative research, scholarship, and creative activity across disciplines. This emphasis will also enhance our ability to educate a diverse and accomplished work force and enrich the broader community. As appropriate, community needs will influence the direction of much of our basic and applied research. By carefully aligning resources to our current and emerging research strengths and priorities, we will improve our national reputation, foster the economic and social prosperity of our region, and contribute to the national and international dialogue among scholars.

Themes for Research Focus

- Las Vegas and the region offer unique research opportunities, often of global significance, for the study of subjects such as sustainable desert cities, rural/frontier environments, urban growth, immigration, and health.
- The issue of sustainability, including environmental, economic, and social sustainability, is particularly relevant for Nevada. Research opportunities in this field abound, such as in the areas of water resources, the hospitality industry, energy systems, health, and education.
- UNLV resides in a city with a unique economic climate, facilitating study of the hospitality industry, entertainment, business, law, construction, architecture, and other regionally important economic concerns.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The current support infrastructure and physical infrastructure must be improved for UNLV to achieve its educational and research goals. Accordingly, we must create and sustain a culture of trust that reflects a service-oriented, positive, helpful campus environment to support faculty, students, and staff. We must intensify our efforts to provide additional well-planned spaces to meet our teaching and research goals. We also need to expand staff support to better manage our growing research enterprise and to support student success. Thus, we need to be committed to the following infrastructure goals:

- Provide the staffing needed to have effective processes and support for our mission.
- Address our technology infrastructure to improve business processes, student support, and communication with students, staff, and faculty.
- Provide the campus with high quality spaces for learning and scholarship.
- Foster a supportive and welcoming service culture.

PLANNING PRIORITIES

During our planning retreat, faculty, students, staff, and administrators discussed and created a prioritized list of action items and desired goals to guide the implementation teams. The discussion below reflects the major priorities for each of the planning areas as determined through campus “vote” at the planning retreat. A detailed list of priorities and “fast track” action items can be found on our web-site.

EDUCATION

The campus called for improving the success of our students, as measured through retention and graduation rates, by establishing a first year and academic success center and initiating first year learning communities that could be used to get our students off to a strong start. The academic success center would be a first point of contact for students with career and major questions, or who had difficulties adjusting to classes and college life. Revising the general education program to embed the skills and values identified above into the undergraduate curriculum was a major priority. We committed to developing a comprehensive assessment program to insure that students were achieving our stated learning outcomes. The faculty also asked for mentoring programs and workshops to help them improve student learning, develop multidisciplinary curricula, and provide our students with better research and professional development experiences. Finally, we committed to working with sister institutions and K-12 to strengthen education on a state wide basis.

RESEARCH

The top research priority was for increasing graduate student support to improve our research programs and provide the state with a highly qualified workforce. The campus prioritized investments that would help us rebuild

and retain current research strengths, and build nationally recognized and ranked programs in focused areas. We prioritized developing mechanisms to support collaborative and multidisciplinary research within UNLV, embedding research into the undergraduate curriculum, and developing stronger research partnerships with other public and private research entities in the state to improve our impact on economic development for Nevada. We recognized the need to invest in regionally relevant areas like sustainability, hospitality, and entertainment should be supported. We committed to an increasing emphasis on competitive research funding, and developing better metrics to assess our progress in growing the research enterprise. Finally, the campus community wanted to establish processes to determine how we would balance support for emerging research priorities and on-going successful research activities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

While there are many potential infrastructure challenges faced by UNLV, our top priority focused on providing faculty and staff with development and mentoring opportunities to improve our educational and research programs, and to lead to clear expectations and better success in promotion and tenure. Developing our IT infrastructure to improve our educational programs, to support students (e.g. iNtegrate), automate routine tasks, and provide better business processes was also a top campus priority. We further committed to building a service oriented culture, streamlined business processes, and local authority and accountability when possible. Finally, the campus recognized that a strong education and research program required the right built space, and asked for improving classrooms and the facilities needed for research and creative activities.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Focus: 50 to 100 Academic Plan builds upon past planning efforts and will lay the foundation for our development into the foreseeable future. Like any plan, we expect that this process will be “evergreen” as we evaluate, revise, and refocus the plan to meet our needs. Following the Regents’ approval of the plan, the President and Provost will appoint Planning Implementation Teams for Education, Research, and Infrastructure. These teams will be small, consisting of a faculty senate representative, a cabinet member, and content area experts as needed. These teams will be responsible for establishing timelines for implementation, recommending the appropriate benchmarks and metrics for monitoring our progress, organizing existing relevant campus groups working in the area of interest, retaining consultants as needed, and recommending smaller *ad hoc* groups for detailed execution of the plans. The teams will periodically report their activities to the Provost and President, and annual updates to chart our progress will be made and publicized as appropriate. The teams will also be asked to coordinate their efforts with the accreditation steering committee that is overseeing our 2010 reaccreditation visit. Once each semester, the teams will meet to insure coordination of effort, open communication, and cross-team support. All academic and administrative units will be accountable for using their resources to expedite plan implementation, and incremental funds will be allocated to meet planning priorities and objectives. The office of the Executive Vice President and Provost will be responsible for coordinating planning on a campus wide basis, with the support of the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration. Several of the top planning priorities are being “fast tracked” and are in the initial stages of implementation, and we will provide additional start-up to support planning priorities within our FY 09 budget.

Accepted

President David B. Ashley

Date