

Strategic Planning Commission
Targeted Research Sub-Committee

Final Report

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Vision

As Appalachian State University evolves in the 21st Century, new and continuing research strengths will become fully integrated into the educational mission of the institution. Interdisciplinary scholarly activities including basic and applied research, creative work, and public outreach will flourish in a growing environment of local, national, and international collaboration. The University will strive for international recognition while maintaining its long-term commitment to protecting our natural environment and the cultures and societies it contains.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Targeted Research Subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Commission is to suggest goals and objectives designed to enhance research and creative endeavors at Appalachian. The reality is that Appalachian is a Comprehensive I institution, and thus will always have limited resources to support research and other scholarly activities. As a committee, we recommend that the University address this by committing University resources to those specific selected areas that have a significant number of productive faculty involved in them, have potential for significant contributions to local and global research questions, or which address a state or regional area of need. In doing so, Targeted Research Areas and potential (future) Targeted Research Areas will be identified and monitored. The purpose of identifying these Targeted Research Areas and laying out the specific mechanisms through which a research endeavor can become a Targeted Research Area is to maximize Appalachian's external funding and scholarly products, thereby improving the University's research quality and prestige. Fortunately, many scholarly areas of current strength align well with current funding opportunities. These areas also match the long-term image of Appalachian State University and the assets that are unique to us (i.e. rich local natural environment and culture, and individuals dedicated to preserving these national treasures).

The mission of Appalachian State University is evolving to include a greater emphasis on scholarly research and creative activities. While Appalachian will remain dedicated to providing a student-centered university experience with high-quality instruction, mentoring, and professional development, we believe an increase in scholarly activity will improve and sustain the institution through the implementation of the Teacher/Scholar model.

Objectives

Objective 1

Efficiently and effectively use university resources to enhance and promote targeted scholarly areas of strength and/or potential.

Rationale: By concentrating the limited resources available on established and identified potential areas of strength and/or need the university will increase scholarly activity more rapidly than if the resources were spread thinly over all units. However, as addressed in Objectives 2 and 3, all interested faculty members should be encouraged and provided the means to increase their scholarly activity in their area of study, with additional resources being provided as their work demonstrates growth potential.

Responsibility: Task Force, Council of Chairs, Deans Council, Provost

Timeline: Fall 2007, Report due Spring 2008

Resources: Time Commitment, no other direct costs

Assessment Strategies: Completed and approved report

Measurable Activities

- a. Officially recognize the following current productive research areas as **Targeted**. The productivity, strength, and future potential of these areas are evidenced by data collected by the ASU Office of Research and Graduate Studies (see appendix A).
 - i. Energy, Environment, Economy
 - ii. Health and Human Services
 - iii. Appalachian Regional Research
 - iv. Math and Science Education
 - v. Viticulture/Enology
 - vi. Visual and Performing Arts (creative work, research, and outreach)

- b. Officially recognize the following areas as having current potential to become Targeted Research Areas, as evidenced by data collected by the ASU Office of Research and Graduate Studies and other administrative units (see appendix A).
 - i. Educational Research
 - ii. Latin American Studies
 - iii. Democracy and Governance (PS/CJ, Comm, History, Eco)
 - iv. Materials Science/Nanotechnology
 - v. Entrepreneurship
 - vi. Disaster Planning and Management
 - vii. Humanities Research

- c. Encourage targeted areas to develop Centers or Institutes in order to:
 - i. Create self-sustaining ability (e.g. infrastructure for external funding)
 - ii. Fulfill the mission of the university
 - iii. Develop/improve the image of the university

- d. Establish a committee to oversee Targeted Research Areas
 - i. Approval of new Targeted and potential areas
 - ii. Develop a sunset clause for eliminating hard dollar resources from unproductive areas
 - iii. Create an evaluation plan

Objective 2

Provide consistent and sufficient space, equipment, and time resources to enable faculty to improve their scholarly endeavors to the level necessary to create or maintain a Targeted Scholarly Area.

Rationale: Space, equipment, and time resources are consistently and repeatedly verified as the limiting factors for the growth and enhancement of scholarly endeavors at Appalachian. Simply stating that academic units will engage in an increased amount of scholarship without providing the necessary resources is futile. Appalachian faculty collectively have an enormous amount of expertise across many different academic disciplines. This expertise can only be utilized to increase external funding and scholarly products if proper resources are provided.

Measurable Activities

- a. In order to effectively establish and continue the Teacher/Scholar model, develop and implement a consistent university-wide policy for required Teaching, Scholarship, and Service loads for tenure-track faculty members. This new policy should allow for multiple “tracks” within each academic unit such that each faculty member’s strengths can be effectively utilized. Available Teaching/Scholarly Release Time tracks should include 12hr/0hr, 9hr/3hr, 6hr/6hr, and 3hr/9hr per semester. Academic units should advertise for a particular track when seeking new faculty members and each faculty member’s track should remain consistent and be specified in their contract. Expectations for scholarly activity must be commensurate with the Scholarly Release Time granted in a particular track.

Responsibility: Faculty Senate, Council of Chairs, Deans Council, Provost, Task Force

Timeline: Policy in place by Spring 2008, Implementation phased in over the following three years

Resources: Time commitment, no other direct costs

Assessment Strategies: New policy adopted and disseminated to faculty, phase-in complete

- b. Provide adequate, well-equipped space for existing and future scholarly activity by developing a specific facilities improvement/expansion plan. This plan should be designed to accommodate laboratory and studio space necessary for increased scholarly activity in each of the current and future Targeted Research Areas, as well as additional shared research space for other existing and developing scholarly work.

Specific Rationale: Existing and potential Targeted Research Areas must not be hindered by the lack of adequate space or the basic equipment needed to perform and support scholarly activities. It is recognized

that in some instances both space and equipment may be shared amongst faculty and even amongst Targeted Research Areas to promote cost-effectiveness and/or collaboration, but ready access to these essentials must be maintained. In addition, it is important that the University recognize the costs and necessity of maintaining equipment and be prepared to support maintenance/service contracts or support staff to keep all facilities and equipment in appropriate condition. Physical facilities are obviously both expensive and require a long-term planning process. Thus it is imperative that both short-term and long-term attention be given to these facilities.

Responsibility: Deans Council, Provost, Chancellor, Leadership of targeted research areas, Design and Construction Office

Timeline: Immediate planning required with on-going, long-term attention. Short-term actions complete by Fall 2008. Long-term actions complete by Spring 2012.

Resources: Large time commitment. Large undetermined financial commitment.

Assessment: Policy in place and incorporated into Design and Construction planning practices for academic buildings. Progressive increase in square footage of building space that is in appropriate condition for research activities and being used by faculty associated with targeted research areas; Availability of ready access to research space by faculty and students; amount of University funding earmarked annually for research space renovation; amount of funding acquired for purchase of new buildings or properties.

i. Short-term Actions:

1. Consider selected renovations to existing facilities to enhance their usefulness for scholarly activities (e.g. the old library building); Ensure academic affairs involvement in the allocation of R & R funds and prioritize funds for selected renovations;
2. Ensure that all new academic building plans include allocated space for scholarship activity.
3. Examine existing buildings not currently owned by the University for rental or purchase if their space is appropriate for current and anticipated research needs; Analyze the Shadowline Dr. building currently for sale and adjacent properties as a possible location.
4. Purchase a large parcel of land as near as possible to the main campus for a future research campus that would interface with application and commercialization of faculty research discoveries.
5. Create a task force to develop a plan for a Research Campus (see Appendix B for outline of needs) and pursue funding through the Development Office.

ii. Long-Term Actions:

1. When a new College of Education building is completed, retain Duncan Hall to renovate as shared on-campus research space;
 2. Develop the Appalachian Research Campus (ARC) as a rich “green” environment for research, economic development, and community outreach. Emphasis should be placed on the needs of the region and the state. The first building on the ARC should be completed within five years. This building, as all of the new facilities, should be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certified.
- c. Provide for improved and increased connection between faculty and library resources at Appalachian. A close relationship between the library and individual faculty members should be emphasized beginning with new faculty orientation. Quality library resources, like those available at Appalachian, are essential to increased scholarly performance.

Objective 3

Ensure a long-term commitment to the Teacher/Scholar model at Appalachian through additional faculty, staff, and students dedicated to the pursuit of external funding and scholarly products.

Rationale: To foster a spirit and culture at Appalachian that supports and encourages the engagement of faculty and students in conducting research and other scholarly activity. Appalachian has an outstanding reputation for providing students with an academic experience that includes a low faculty/student ratio and a close-knit community. Increased opportunities for hands-on scholarly mentorship (“teaching by doing”) of undergraduate and graduate students is consistent with Appalachian’s student-focused mission.

Measurable Activities

- a. Provide competitive research assistant salaries at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Engage in professional world-wide advertising for these competitive positions to attract the most capable individuals.

Responsibility: Office of Research and Graduate Studies, Task force to examine competitive salary data and make proposals for funding sources for phased increases for Appalachian research assistants.

Timeline: Spring 2008

Resources: Time commitment to study and make recommendations, future funding needs to be determined by Task force report. A competitive pay rate for graduate students would be \$10,000 - \$15,000 per student per year. The funds from the graduate school are currently approximately \$7500 per student per year. In many cases, these funds should be supplemented by contributions from the grants that support the student’s research.

Assessment Strategies: Completed report, Identified funding sources to support stipend increases.

- b. Assist in the provision of competitive salaries and facility resources for research personnel (research professors, technicians, post-docs, etc.) to assist professors in the development of internationally recognized research programs. Engage in professional world-wide advertising for these competitive positions, so as to attract the most capable, internationally diverse individuals.

Responsibility: Office of Research and Graduate Studies, Public Relations, and Admissions.

Timeline: Fall 2008

Resources: These salaries may mainly come from soft money from grants, but could be supplemented by the university to sustain successful research areas, especially if they evolve into a permanent position.

Assessment Strategies: Task force work is completed and plan is developed and implemented.

- c. Provide start-up funds for new faculty members engaged in research. Funds should be competitive with peer institutions for each specific field of research. While some funds are currently provided in the College of Arts and Sciences, this resource/incentive must be more consistent across the university.

Rationale: Start-up funds are essential to attract new faculty interested in significant research, and greatly reduce the amount of time it takes for a new faculty member to build a viable research program.

Responsibility: Deans Council, Provost.

Timeline: Spring 2008

Resources: Approximately \$50k average for each new research intensive faculty member.

Assessment Strategies: Start-up funds consistently provided.

- d. Increase staff in Business Affairs for post-award contract and grant administration. The increase in the number of personnel should be commensurate with the increase in funding dollars.

Rationale: Current staff levels are not sufficient to adequately support faculty with necessary grant financial management assistance, while insuring regulatory compliance.

Responsibility: Task Force, Business Affairs.

Timeline: Fall 2007

Resources: Approximately \$40k for an additional Accounting Specialist

Assessment Strategies: Staff hired and trained. Formula established to incur new positions as funding numbers increase.

- e. Increase support staff in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies for pre-award support. Specifically, hire experienced grant writers with expertise in Targeted Research Areas.

Rationale: Current staff levels are not sufficient to adequately support faculty with necessary grant writing and proposal submittal assistance.

Responsibility: Provost, Office of Research and Graduate Studies.

Timeline: Fall 2007

Resources: Approximately \$70k for each grant writing specialist.

Assessment Strategies: Staff hired and trained. Formula established to incur new positions as activity increases.

Objective 4

Alter university and college level policies and procedures to further enable departments to encourage research, scholarship, and creative endeavors. Institute a university-wide plan for the Teacher/Scholar model. Also, provide adequate supplemental support and incentives to increase external funding and scholarly products. Develop a task force to recommend and ensure specific changes outlined in the following activities.

Rationale: These additional policy and procedural changes will allow for the completion of the Objectives and Activities in the previous portions of this document.

Responsibility: Provost appoints Task Force

Timeline: Fall 2007, report due Spring '08

Resources: Time Commitment, no financial resources

Assessment Strategies: Completed report reviewed and approved by Faculty Senate, Council of Chairs, Deans Council and Provost by Spring '09

Measurable Activities

- a. Revise faculty handbook
 - i. Include new policy for required Teaching, Scholarship, and Service loads for tenure-track faculty members as described in Objective 2 a. This new policy should allow for multiple “tracks” within each academic unit such that each faculty member’s strengths can be effectively utilized. Available Teaching/Scholarly Release Time tracks should include 12hr/0hr, 9hr/3hr, 6hr/6hr, and 3hr/9hr per semester.
 - ii. Allow for the title of “Research Professor”.
 - iii. Update P & T portion of the document in an effort to make the requirement for active scholarship more consistent across all academic units.
- b. Establish appropriate and aggressive university policy for the collection and distribution of indirect costs
 - i. Maximize the amount of indirect costs returned to the university through aggressive negotiations with all funding agencies. Hire an external consultant with experience negotiating with funding agencies to work with post-award staff and the Office of Internal Audits in this pursuit. Note that this item must be complete by Spring 08 to enable a change within the next cycle.
 - ii. Proper portion of indirect costs should go back to projects. PI should not be penalized by new policy.
- c. Recruit new faculty with experience and interest in current and potential Targeted Research Areas.
- d. New faculty should be expected to pursue external funding. Include the requirement for an active scholarship program in all faculty job announcements.

- e. Meet UNC system requirements/objectives (ex. economic development, science education)
- f. Encourage practical applied research in local/regional community.
- g. Develop means for faculty incentives and recognition for mentoring students in Community Based Research and Public Service Research Program areas coordinated by the Office of Student Research and Department of Student Programs ACT Office.
- h. Cover policies, procedures, expectations and resources in new faculty interviews, orientation, and workshops.
- i. Target second-year faculty (new directions) with informational sessions and support mechanisms to pursue scholarship.
- j. Encourage academic units to tie merit pay to successful completion of scholarly activities as expected for individual faculty Teaching/Scholarly Release Time tracks. (See Objective 2 a.)
- k. Create financial and other incentives to pursue scholarship. For example, provide a university funded parking spot to each department for the top scholarly performer.
- l. Make it hard to hide! Recognize and promote scholarly activities in public forums, e-mail, academic building displays of active research.
- m. Require periodic in-house presentations of all faculty research.

International Emphasis

International components to be emphasized within each of the above Objectives:

- Encourage collaboration with international partners
- Look at all research and creative activities from a global perspective
- International development office to identify international research opportunities and present to faculty
- Develop a mentorship program that includes international development
- Offer increased International Service Learning opportunities

Overall Assessment

Increases from fiscal year 2006 statistics:

- Increase number of grant and contract proposals submitted by 100% in 3 years
- Increase number of successful grant proposals by 50% in 3 years
- Increase funds from successful grant proposals, patents, intellectual property, disclosures by 100% in 5 years
- Increase faculty publications by 100% in 5 years (as recorded in annual reports)
- Increase faculty creative exhibitions by 100% in 5 years (as recorded in annual reports)
- Increase faculty and student scholarly presentations at national, international meetings and conferences by 100% in 5 years (as recorded in annual reports)
- Increase number of leadership roles held by faculty members in professional organizations by 50% in 5 years (as recorded in annual reports)
- Increase indirect funds collected by 200% in 5 years