Purdue University

Strategic Planning Committee

Tiger Team

Student Success / Student Experience

White Paper

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Purdue University
"A Global University in the Heart of the Midwest"
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Student Success and the Student Experience

Student success is defined as an intentional experience that leads to a degree, intellectual and personal growth, and prepares a student for life and a career in a dynamic, global society.

What should students expect of the Purdue University experience? At a basic level, students should expect to find a nurturing, concerned community of peers, advisors, staff, and faculty who respect diversity, encourage independent thinking, defend different ideas, and support intellectual curiosity. Everyone at Purdue University should do their best to make sure that students succeed, that students find a major that matches their strengths and interests, that they discover a supportive academic and social community, and that they are not lost in a crowd. Students who encounter academic, financial, social, or family problems should have a place where they can find responsible counseling and solutions. Specifically, this should involve sophisticated pre-enrollment programs, a dynamic university advising and support system, academic and co-curricular programs that create and maintain community, a fresh look at entry-level courses, and a Center for Student Excellence and Leadership.

We, the authors of this white paper, view student success as a multi-faceted concept – one that includes an array of components to help students:

- Prepare for admission to and success at Purdue University
- Develop a connection to Purdue University before, during, and after enrollment
- Respect and value all in an inclusive community
- Act as global citizens through civic engagement
- Demonstrate critical thinking, written and oral communication, and decision making
- Emerge as active, life-long learners

By enhancing these elements of the university experience, Purdue will increase its retention and graduation rates as well as rankings and prestige. As the result of lessons learned and insight gleaned through interviews, surveys, presentations, open forums, extant reports and

other institutional data sources, we believe that the following recommendations will enhance the Purdue student experience:

- Pathways to the Global University in the Heart of the Midwest
- Building a Foundation for Success at Purdue: The First Two Years
- Center for Student Excellence and Leadership
- Transformational Teaching and Learning
- Enhancing the Graduate Experience
- Fostering Engagement through Campus Design

An expanded description for each of these six categories follows.

Pathways to the Global University in the Heart of the Midwest

As a land-grant institution, Purdue's mission is creating pathways to and preparing students for college so they can live more fulfilling lives and contribute in positioning Indiana as a leader in the emerging global environment. As a global university, Purdue seeks to be the "University of Choice" in the institution's areas of strength for the most talented students from across the state, nation, and world. To these ends, we recommend that

- Indiana students wishing to be academically prepared to enter Purdue pursue the CORE 40 – Academic Honors Diploma.
- All prospective students take part in periodic assessment programs (e.g. College Board Pathways) which provide feedback on the students' progress for success in college and can be a valuable tool for students, family members, guidance counselors, and other educators.
- All prospective students take four years of high school math in addition to the current academic requirements associated with entrance to Purdue University

We endorse that University's faculty, staff, and students take action so that Purdue:

- Becomes the University of Choice for the state, nation, and world's most talented students through strategic financial support, including the Presidential and Trustees Scholarships, as well as curricular and co-curricular experiences

- Creates robust, articulated partnerships with pre-college programs, including the Twenty-first Century Scholars program, to increase the preparation, access, and success of first-generation and low-income prospective Purdue students

- Establishes a Purdue Promise program that meets the financial and academic/social support needs of low-income and first-generation students

- Provides increased coordination between Purdue West Lafayette and Purdue's regional campuses in order to enhance student success

- Provides increased mobility between Purdue West Lafayette and the state's two-year institutions – notably Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana – in order to enhance student preparedness

Building a Foundation for Success at Purdue: The First Two Years

Institutional data reveals that nearly 70% of the students who voluntarily leave Purdue do so after the first or second year. Although some programs have been implemented over the past decade to address success in the first year of college, the voluntary withdrawal rate in the first two years of college make it imperative that Purdue take a more deliberate, positive, and coordinated approach to its student success efforts.   To ensure institutional and student success, Purdue will provide its students with experiences that meet their needs and high expectations.

Students should expect to come to Purdue to begin a twenty-first century adventure. The vocabulary of the twenty-first century is studded with new words: out-sourcing, in-sourcing, flat worlds, free trade communities, etc. As never before, we live in a global age. We trade globally, communicate globally, travel globally, work globally, and think globally. Purdue students can expect to graduate and interact with people from different nations, people with diverse religions, social customs, histories, and political institutions.

In their first year, students should have a global experience. For example, they might take a common course that emphasizes global thinking and communication that is team-taught by professors in liberal arts/social sciences and science/engineering, and that allows students from different countries and cultures to study and work together on global problems and challenges. The goal is to encourage students to think in global terms and to understand how education can foster global understanding. Thinking across disciplines will force students to see the social and

cultural ramifications of scientific and engineering advancements. For example, it is one thing to understand how to build a bridge; it is quite another to understand the social and cultural implications of a bridge.

To enhance student success in the global era, we recommend that Purdue:

- Create a University College to foster guided academic exploration across disciplines resulting in an informed program choice. The University College would integrate the following characteristics:
  - Home of the University Honors Program
  - A cohort of faculty from each of the colleges and schools
  - Alternative to direct admission to some programs
  - Access to courses that foster career exploration
- Foster intellectual, professional, personal, and community development through the establishment of an annual common intellectual theme that unites the entire campus. This effort would provide a foundation for programs and efforts within learning communities, first year seminars, a common reading program, and other similar initiatives. In conjunction with the annual theme effort, we recommend that the institution establish:
  - A creative, diverse, and faculty-led selection of seminars, required for all incoming students, that foster intellectual development
  - A common reading initiative across the university community to include all incoming students
  - A focus on information literacy for all students
- Expand learning communities to meet faculty and student demand in order to promote the development of intellectual and social community

Center for Student Excellence and Leadership

We propose that the university create a Center for Student Excellence and Leadership to centralize services and resources that contribute to academic excellence and student leadership. Specifically we recommend the Center would:

- Provide space and coordination for

- o Academic support services and resources
- o Career and placement services
- o Expanded academic and career exploration assistance
- o Decision making support and guidance for students changing degree objectives
- Coordinate and assess an academic advisor training program for new and veteran advisors
- Coordinate a student success assessment and evaluation effort including:
  - o The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Survey
  - o The Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey
  - o The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - o The Before College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)
  - o Large Scale Student Satisfaction Surveys
  - o Course Evaluations
  - o Other Regular and Periodic University-Wide Surveys and Evaluations
- Provide proactive academic support including
  - o early identification of needs and guidance to resources
  - o celebration of excellence.
- Serve as a "Hub" of student life and student activities
  - o House student organizations
  - o Provide coordination and a one-stop shop for student enrichment activities in a place that reflects the way in which students live their lives.
  - o Increase the collaboration among student organizations
  - o Increase engagement between academic and co-curricular student experiences

Transformational Teaching and Learning

In their seminal work *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research*, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) report studies suggesting that faculty interaction with students inside and outside the classroom enhances learning, satisfaction, and success. Closer to home, students perceive that Purdue has a few great teachers who apply pedagogies based on teaching

and learning research, who care, and who prepare well. However, many faculty do not have training or access to optimal facilities to implement effective teaching and learning methods. For first- and second-year students, the problem is compounded by the sense of being "just a number" when enrolled in extremely large, entry level courses – informally referred to as "gateway courses" by faculty, and "weed out" courses by students. These courses – by nature of their size, the diversity of student preparation, and classroom facilities – significantly limit the impact of even the most effective of teachers. Ultimately, these introductory courses which should provide the foundational knowledge for more advanced courses in many disciplines, especially the STEM disciplines, frequently provide overwhelming challenges to our incoming students. To address these issues, we recommend that Purdue:

- Create a culture of success within gateway courses by:
  - Redesigning commonly used "gateway" courses to integrate the latest approaches to teaching and learning. This will impact class size, teaching methodology, and assessment. In conjunction with this, Purdue should publish course outcomes to the broader university community
  - Developing Endowed Professorships to attract top scholars/teachers to develop gateway courses with a focus on maximizing preparation of students for further courses and retention in STEM fields
  - Developing an information technology-based early-warning system that draws on data stored by academic technology tools so that outreach and support can be effectively recommended and targeted before exams
  - Enhancing tutoring and other supplemental instruction services targeted specifically at students in these high-risk courses
- Require all assistant professors, lecturers, as well as all instructors teaching first-year student courses to participate in a research-based ongoing seminar on enhancing teaching and learning. One specific approach would be to provide release from one course for new faculty to attend a course in Teaching and Learning. It should be expected that all new faculty complete this within 2 years of appointment.
- Modify design requirements of classrooms to accommodate active and collaborative learning. All new and renovated classrooms should conform to this standard.

- Offer every student a transformational learning experience such as study abroad, undergraduate research, internships, entrepreneurial experience, or an extensive service learning program by the time they graduate.
- Offer every student a capstone experience to integrate the intellectual, civic, and professional components associated with his or her discipline.

Enhancing the Graduate Experience

A vibrant graduate student community at Purdue contributes to learning, discovery, and engagement at Purdue University. More importantly, a diverse graduate student community helps make Purdue a global institution in the heart of the Midwest. In order to continue to increase the intellectual vigor, develop a brain trust for the future, and foster this global community, Purdue must recruit and retain the most talented graduate students from around the world. We recommend:

- The stipends and benefit package should be competitive with the Big Ten and our peer universities.
- An effort to create a greater sense of community and support among graduate students, between graduate students and faculty, and between graduate and undergraduate students should be made. This will foster the feeling of involvement and belonging that will contribute to student success at the graduate level. This effort could include a greater number of social and cultural activities
- A graduate student support center that extends beyond the traditional faculty advisor (major professor). Such a center would include examination of interdisciplinary options, career counseling, guidance on navigating the university system, and even advice and suggestions on how to cope with stress, deadlines, and fatigue. The center should be located within the same building as the proposed Center for Student Excellence and Leadership.

Fostering Engagement through Campus Design

The student experience could be significantly improved by reconsidering the metrics for campus design. By revising our fundamental beliefs on effective space design and utilization, the campus could be better configured to foster engagement between students, faculty, and staff. The opportunity to engage with faculty and others in the community is essential if we want to develop lifelong-learners with a passion for Purdue, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and the competence to advance professionally. Specifically, we recommend the following changes to promote social, instructional, and professional engagement:

- Social: Cultural and Student Organizations – Create a student-accessible (24-hour availability) space in a prominent location to expand and enhance student interaction. The space would be designed to accommodate student organization offices, meeting spaces, and collaborative pods, in addition to housing regularly scheduled and promoted student social activities and events. This building could also serve as the location for the Center for Student Excellence and Leadership, thereby further associating the positive and friendly atmosphere of the student groups and activities with the support services provided by the center.
- Instructional: Classrooms - Large classrooms work for teaching, but do not allow for the free exchange of ideas that some students of today crave. Classrooms are not just a room for lecture style teaching, but instead need to be a place for interaction and dialogue. Classroom size should reflect multiple teaching approaches.
- Professional: Office areas - Space needs to be created in current buildings for faculty to meet with small groups of students.

Funding the Plan

This ambitious plan has an ambitious price tag. However, the cost of failing to achieve the objectives described in this white paper is far greater than the cost of the overall effort itself. For this reason, Purdue must procure funding to fulfill the promises associated with the student success initiatives outlined in this white paper. And the funding should come from a variety of sources including:

- Local, state, federal, and international governments – the effort has direct benefits for the citizens and economy of Indiana as well as those of the nation and world. Simply stated, Purdue must make the case to these various levels of government that the costs of these educational experiences are worth the investment.

- Corporations and alumni – Purdue University provides invaluable services to regional, national, and global corporations. As in the past, we would hope that these corporations assist Purdue's new global initiatives.

- Current students – students derive immediate benefits associated with this plan and thus should be expected to pay some of the cost.