Middle States Self-study Campus Priorities

Our Middle States Steering Committee (MSSC), working with the requirements that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has established, will identify three to five campus priorities to frame our reaccreditation self-study process. To ensure an inclusive and transparent process, the MSSC met with the campus Leadership Forum and the Council of Chairs in fall 2019 to discuss their members’ priorities, and then surveyed all campus employees in spring 2020.

After analyzing the outreach and survey data, the MSSC has identified four widely supported campus priorities that committee members agree are forward-looking, worthy of a deep investigation, and promising enough to benefit SUNY Potsdam over the long-term.

Priority 1: Strategic enrollment management. This priority will encompass all aspects of student recruitment and retention, potentially including the areas of new student orientation, advising, online learning, micro-credentialing, 3/2 programs, and the campus budget (because our budget is so intimately tied to recruitment and retention). Campus leaders (i.e., Leadership Forum and Council of Chairs) identified this priority as their second highest, and the campus in general identified this as their highest priority (an 8.3 average on a 10-point scale).

Priority 2: Creativity. This priority will encompass all ways we leverage creativity as an institution of higher education. This not only acknowledges the importance the arts play on our campus and as part of our mission but will also include the scholarship conducted by faculty and students, creative instruction inside and outside the classroom, applied learning, and creative programming. Although the campus leadership did not identify this as a priority, the campus in general assigned it a score of 7.6 out of 10.

Priority 3: Inclusive excellence. This priority will encompass all aspects of how we support, and how we could better support, human diversity on our campus and within our community. We will use a broad definition of diversity, and so will potentially include populations like minority faculty, staff, and students; first generation and non-traditional students; LGBTQ+ students; and students in need of accommodations. It will also potentially include programs and committees such as CSTEP, EOP, and DIAC, as well as diversity in the classroom (e.g., ‘Diversity’-designated courses, WAYS 103: Speaking About Diversity in the new Potsdam Pathways GenEd). Campus leadership identified this priority as one of their top five, and the campus in general assigned it a score of 7.2 out of 10.

Priority 4: Strategic decision making. This priority will take a broad look at the ways we make (or could make) evidence-based decisions on our campus. It will potentially include the areas of assessment, transparency and communication, sustainability, and budgetary decisions. Campus leaders identified this as their highest priority, and the campus in general assigned it a score of 7.5 out of 10.

Campus leadership and the campus in general assigned a high priority rating to faculty and staff morale. However, this is not directly connected to the University’s mission or to a Middle States standard; therefore, the MSSC does not recommend listing it as a separate priority. Instead, we plan to address this area of concern by embedding it as a point of inquiry into all applicable priorities (e.g., How does strategic decision-making impact faculty/staff morale? How does strategic enrollment management affect faculty/staff morale?).