

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Over the past decade, Drake University has aggressively engaged the challenges confronting us with the attitude that they also represented opportunities. Much has been accomplished and past challenges have been turned into achievements. We do believe Drake has become a high performing organization that is mission-driven as it prepares for the future.

We intend to confront the future in the same way; challenges will be turned into opportunities. The following discussion identifies some challenges we see and also gives a brief description of ways we have begun to, or might, address them.

MISSION AND INTEGRITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Drake University recognizes that we face a number of challenges as we strive to improve the effectiveness of our structures and processes to ensure fulfillment our mission. These challenges, however, also present opportunities for the University to aggressively and creatively move forward. Following is a sample of the challenges and the opportunities they present.

1. It is a challenge to ensure that understanding of the Mission remains pervasive among all campus constituencies. We must help students see the mission as a blueprint for their education and understand that their success in developing as responsible global citizens will result from their whole experience: academic and co-curricular. In addition, new faculty and staff members must also become aware of the mission and be provided with training in the best practices to achieve mission-based outcomes.

This challenge also presents an opportunity to examine and redesign several University practices. For example:

- We must better plan how to combine coursework, cocurricular learning, and student life and residence hall programming to help students achieve engaged global citizenship.
- It is important that Drake's commitment to *responsible global citizenship* and *integration of liberal arts and sciences with professional preparation* be emphasized in Admissions materials and programs and on the Web site.

- Drake's colleges, schools and cocurricular units might be encouraged to develop statements placing their programs more explicitly in the context of these goals.
- Finally, we need to assess faculty and staff orientation and development activities to ensure that they prepare Drake employees to support these goals.

2. Nationally there has been much discussion about the decline of faculty governance. Drake University has a long history of participatory and effective faculty governance. We are not immune, however, from the national trend. The Drake Faculty Senate has substantial authority over curriculum, faculty evaluation and planning, but a changing generation of faculty who devote more time to research, active learning and their families seems less committed to institutional citizenship. The challenge in the future is to maintain the vigor of Drake's tradition of faculty governance.

To address this challenge we might:

- enhance the discussion of faculty governance in new faculty orientation sessions;
- consider establishing a faculty governance award similar to those for teaching and mentoring;
- The President and Provost should consider additional ways to acknowledge and reward the contributions of those who contribute to the governance system.

3. Compliance with the increasing number of federal, state and local laws and regulations that apply to colleges and universities will continue to pose challenges. In the past, courts often exempted institutions of higher education from the rules that apply to businesses and other organizations. That is no longer the case. New measures are proliferating. The EPA, for example, has a special initiative to ensure that colleges and universities comply with hazardous waste regulations. Homeland Security is requiring that colleges and universities report inventories of chemicals terrorists might use and have security measures in place.

While compliance measures can be burdensome, they also present an opportunity to carefully examine the safety of the campus environment for our students, faculty and staff. Drake has already hired a full-time environmental safety specialist and we must make sure that person has the support of the administration to implement appropriate safety measures, present training and secure cooperation of faculty, staff and students. We must be alert to the possibility that additional operating budget support may be necessary to achieve full compliance.

4. Strengthening the alignment of the Drake Curriculum with the *Mission Explication* will require significant attention over the next few years. Since the Drake Curriculum was adopted before the *Mission Statement* was revised, it is to be expected that the fit is not perfect. Remedying this situation needs to be a top priority.

As discussed in this report the Drake Curriculum revision passed in 2006 has already resulted in the critical thinking, engaged citizenship, and senior capstones Areas of Inquiry (AOI) being revised to meet the mission-based outcomes. Conversations have begun with instructors of other AOIs and suggestions forwarded to the Planning Council about how to achieve greater focus with the general education program. Continuing support and encouragement must be provided for the efforts of the Drake Curriculum Analysis and Policy Committee, the University Curriculum Committee, and the work of the Associate Provost for Curriculum, Faculty Development and Assessment.

5. Increasing campus awareness of and adherence to the values articulated in the *Statement of Principles*, particularly those that address issues of civil discourse and respect for difference and disagreement will provide a challenging opportunity. The uncivil state of public discourse in American society requires an appropriate response from colleges and universities. Drake University has an opportunity to become a model for effective dialogue on critical issues for Iowa and for our students.

The *Statement of Principles* provides a ready context for campus leaders to emphasize the core values for civil discourse and respect for differences. The President and Provost need to increase the frequency of references to the *Statement*. In addition, we need to consider how to more prominently feature the *Statement* at critical events such as New Student Orientation, Welcome Weekend, and orientations for new faculty and staff members. Giving greater prominence to the *Statement* on the website also needs to be explored. As we prepare students for *engaged citizenship* we can ask them to read and utilize effective models of civic dialogue.

6. Increasing the diversity of the campus community, both in respect to composition of population and in respect to deeper educational experiences of diversity, is a continuing challenge. Some progress has been made in recent years but much remains to be accomplished.

Opportunities exist to effectively meet this challenge. As senior faculty members retire, the Provost must emphasize the need to redefine positions. Current practices designed to diversify search pools must be continued. The Admission Office must strengthen relationships with high schools with diverse populations and recruitment of international students must be enhanced. In addition, the current Engaged Citizen initiative has created new courses on Native American, African-American, and Asian politics. As we review Drake Curriculum AOIs, such as the Multicultural and International Experience area, we must strengthen the courses and experiences that reflect diversity. Review of the relevant areas has been proposed for the next strategic plan.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Preparation for the future requires effective planning that is a mix of vision and realism with goals directly tied to the allocation of resources. It also requires a nimble organization that can respond to challenges and opportunities while maintaining a focus on core values and its mission.

1. An unexpected challenge has developed with respect to enrollment. Through 2006, enrollment planning proceeded with recognition of demographic projections that there would be fewer high school graduates in Drake University's geographic recruitment area. We have assumed that to enroll the desired number of first-year students, we needed to effectively address that challenge. Fall 2007 posed a surprise; even after cutting off all first-year student enrollment on May 1, almost 100 more students enrolled than was considered optimal. Preparation to serve the additional students presented a significant challenge and we responded following the principle that it was important to deliver the educational experience that had been promised. While preliminary evidence suggests that we were successful, we cannot accommodate 100 students above the fall 2008 enrollment target. Bringing greater predictability to enrollment planning is the challenge.

This situation presents an opportunity. Analysis of available data suggests that there have been some changes in how talented students view the University; that in fact we are now more often competing with other private schools for the best students rather than with public universities. The introduction of a new academic program in the Health Sciences contributed to the unexpected increase in the number of first-year students. While additional analysis of fall 2008 admissions will be needed, the early indicators suggest that the same factors remain salient. If this trend holds it affords us the opportunity to reduce the discount rate and look more carefully at our admission practices. Reducing the discount rate will contribute to the long-term financial health of the University.

2. Drake will be challenged to continue disciplined planning. In difficult times, it is easier to stay focused on the mission and core priorities because of budget constraints. As the financial situation improves, it is tempting to move away from mission-driven, strategic planning and budgeting. Economic good times create an atmosphere that encourages units to advance proposals for program development and expansion of personnel.

The new Three-year Planning Cycle provides an opportunity to meet this challenge by maintaining the focus on the University's central mission. The president and the vice presidents must collaborate with the Senior Advisory Council to exercise effective oversight. Connecting budgeting to the strategic plan is the responsibility of the entire President's Cabinet as well as the Faculty Senate Budget Committee.

3. Societal and economic trends will continue to present unforeseeable challenges. Planning effectively for them will require persistent attention to emerging trends and opportunities. Sustaining the practice of environmental scanning is the challenge.

Part of that challenge is met by maintaining a vigorous system of regular external reviews of academic and administrative units as powerful self-reflective and rethinking exercises. The challenge is to not allow these reviews to become perfunctory, but to make the exercise truly regenerative.

Adhering to the requirements of the new three-year planning cycle is another important step in meeting this challenge. In addition, the President and vice presidents must maintain campus awareness of significant trends in the environment that affect higher education. The Provost's *Announcements*, for example, can be an important vehicle for meeting this challenge but additional venues of communication must be enhanced as well.

4. Rapid technological change will continue both to affect the learning styles of our students and expand our capabilities for delivering knowledge. One challenge is to maintain expertise and planning that ensure the availability of technological tools necessary to effective pedagogy. A related challenge is to prepare faculty and staff members to effectively use those tools.

One opportunity to meet this challenge is provided by the Student Technology Fee. We need to continue to use the fee to support faculty drawing upon technology in the instructional process. Through the Institute for Creative Teaching and Learning, the creation of which appears to be emerging from the current planning process, we must find release time for faculty members to explore how to enhance learning through the use of technology.

5. Drake University needs to move beyond student tuition/fees as the primary revenue budget driver. Net tuition and fees represent 60 percent of Drake's operating budget. When room and board charges are added, total student tuition/fees provide 70 percent of all operating revenues. The challenge is to significantly increase our endowment in order to become less tuition dependent.

The opportunity to address this challenge is found in the capital campaign that has just been launched. A major goal of that effort is to increase the endowment. Those involved in soliciting gifts during the campaign will need to keep endowment as the major focus.

6. Significant progress has been made toward achieving faculty and staff compensation goals. We are, however, not satisfied that progress has been sufficient. The challenge is to find a way to meet our goals so we are able to hire and retain the high quality faculty and staff members critical to strengthening the learning environment.

There are several opportunities to address this challenge. First, the new Faculty and Staff Compensation Committee is responsible for reviewing salary studies and offering recommendations to the President's Cabinet. Second, improvement in the financial condition of the University in recent years affords an opportunity to be more aggressive with respect to compensation.

7. The unpredictability of benefit costs continues to pose a challenge. The University must continue to monitor costs while planning effectively to address the needs of its employees.

One way to address this challenge is for the University administration to continue to work with the Faculty Senate Benefits Committee to assess current benefits as well as look for new creative opportunities. This collaboration of faculty, staff and administration should result in awareness of the issues and full discussion of how to achieve an acceptable goal. In addition, enhancement of the current Wellness Program may be one way to contain costs.

STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Drake University has provided evidence of student learning and effective teaching. We have clearly identified learning outcomes for the University and individual programs, encouraged collaboration across college lines and with Student Life and the larger community to achieve those goals. At the same time, we face a number of challenges in the quest to more fully achieve the goals identified in the *Mission Explication*.

1. One challenge is to strengthen efforts to provide more direct, proactive support of excellence in teaching. As was discussed in the Criterion 3 chapter, a variety of efforts are underway but these need to be better coordinated. The most pressing challenge is accommodating faculty workload to allow time for development of, and experimentation with, teaching skills and approaches.

The most salient opportunity to address this challenge is creation of the Institute for Creative Learning and Teaching. The Institute is one of the proposals before the Planning Council and is emerging as a high priority among the capital campaign projects. Creating the Institute is likely to be a priority in the next strategic plan.

2. Improvement of student writing skills poses a unique challenge. This challenge emerges from NSSE data indicating that fewer than half of Drake students believe that their persuasive writing is stronger than when they matriculated, and only 34% of seniors report preparing two or more drafts of a paper; well below the 49% at peer institutions.

The opportunity to address this challenge may reside in establishing a Center for Effective Writing and Communication within the Institute for Creative Learning and Teaching. Such

a Center has been proposed in the Planning Council. At the same time, we must hold workshops to assist faculty members to design effective writing assignments. The Associate Provost for Curriculum, Faculty Development, and Assessment has initiated discussions of writing outcomes and best practices to achieve the outcomes with instructors of Written Communication courses. He also will facilitate evaluation of the effectiveness of writing in First Year Seminars.

3. The challenge of strengthening and expanding the Drake digital environment is an important one. How can the University enhance support for Drake faculty to develop and support curriculum-based “virtual” electronic resources?

One way to meet this challenge is to set aside a portion of the technology fee dollars to support faculty development of curriculum-related virtual activities. In addition, establishing the Institute for Creative Learning and Teaching can provide both support and encouragement for the enhancement of learning through the use of technology.

4. Implementation and assessment of planned Drake Curriculum revisions and those that will emerge from the Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning project pose challenges. These include further developing and institutionalizing the new Engaged Citizen Experience and incorporating mission-based learning outcomes into our senior capstones. Beyond revision of individual categories, however, development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for assessing student learning outcomes and using the data to review the Drake Curriculum is needed. This must include direct evidence of student learning.

The Drake Curriculum Analysis and Planning Committee has been given a clear charge to develop a long-term plan using multiple measures for the assessment of the mission-based learning outcomes. The opportunity to address this challenge relies heavily on persistence in efforts that are underway. Participation in the Assessment Academy and CIC/CLA consortium provides a significant opportunity to focus and follow through on those efforts. In addition to the design aspects, providing operating budget resources is necessary.

5. The mandates associated with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act are likely to require reporting of additional data related to assessment, tuition increases, administration of financial aid and much more. Developing the structures and resources to support data reporting is a challenge.

The creation of key University committees and administrative positions is a positive step in this direction. The Associate Director of Institutional Research already is doing much of this work. It is important to monitor the demands on this position.

This challenge also provides Drake University with the opportunity to enhance what is already under way. We have adopted a policy emphasizing transparency. The Drake University Databook is available on a publicly accessible web site. This policy is manifested in our participation in the *USA Today* publication of NSSE results and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities College Accountability Network. We intend to seize new opportunities as they arise rather than waiting for mandates.

6. It will be a challenge to expand achievement of our Mission goal of responsible global citizenship and our commitment to internationalize the Drake experience on-campus and to provide greater opportunities for experiential learning and study abroad off-campus. International efforts are expensive and present a challenge for the structure of some academic programs.

Participation in the *American Council on Education's International Collaboration Initiative* provides the opportunity to learn from the efforts of other institutions. The coming capital campaign is likely to have support for international efforts as a major goal. Securing gifts to support these activities may be possible. In addition, the university must review and revise internal structures, such as the calendar, that provide obstacles for student study away.

7. Student satisfaction with our advising system is not at the desired level. The challenge is to identify the reasons for student dissatisfaction as well as find a way to implement an effective advising system that is not burdensome to faculty.

Conducting research to determine why the level of student satisfaction with advising is lower than desirable can lead to an action plan based on data. Some efforts to gather data and a pilot advising program already have been initiated. Using the data gathered and the results of the pilot project may offer a significant opportunity to address the advising challenge.

ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The chapter discussing how Drake University meets the requirements encompassed by Criterion 4: Acquisition, Discovery and Application of Knowledge amply illustrates our commitment to a life of learning. While we are proud of the supports provided, it is also true that there are challenges associated with that commitment. This section describes those challenges as well as the opportunities they present.

1. As is well documented in the literature, plagiarism is a challenge confronting all institutions of higher education. The challenge for Drake University is to sustain and enhance current efforts to address academic dishonesty among both faculty and students. One of the core issues with both students and faculty is understanding of and adherence to copyright laws.

Drake University has responded by revising academic integrity statements, developing honor codes in several colleges and schools, including statements on most course syllabi, discussions in classes by individual professors, and workshops on copyright laws for faculty

members. We need to enhance our vigilance by reviewing college and school honor codes; considering how to more effectively incorporate issues of academic integrity into both introductory and advanced courses; increasing attention to copyright laws in new faculty orientation sessions; and preparing special sessions for each college and school faculty.

2. One topic recently receiving much attention in higher education, especially as many senior faculty members approach retirement, is developing a new generation of leaders. Drake University faces the same challenge.

There are two opportunities the University must seize. First, leadership development must become a more explicit aspect of current faculty and staff development programs. Support for attendance at off-campus leadership development seminars can be provided from the current faculty and staff development allocations. In addition, leadership development can become a more prominent feature of both faculty and staff on-campus development programming.

Second, the current planning process presents an opportunity to more creatively address this challenge. The Planning Council “People” Subcommittee has suggested the University develop a comprehensive leadership development program for faculty and staff members. Before developing action steps, however, we must determine what programming faculty and staff members desire and identify models for development. The data collected can then be used to design endeavors that have a higher probability of success.

3. Federal regulations affecting research activities continue to expand. The challenge for Drake University and other institutions of higher education is to comply with these dictates.

Reorganization of the Provost’s office planned for spring semester of 2008 will afford the opportunity to address compliance issues associated with human subjects and animal research. The University IRB, for example, needs to be strengthened, probably supported by a partial staff position in the Provost’s Office.

4. Drake University faces a challenge faced by all schools that are shifting to a faculty model emphasizing active and collaborative learning. The undergraduate research movement is part of this trend. Since expectations for research and service have not diminished, the pedagogical shift has resulted in an increase in faculty workload. The challenge is to redesign the faculty role to take account of the stresses accompanying active and collaborative learning.

5. A closely related challenge is the United States higher education system in which seat time is equated with learning and also serves as the basis for revenue (tuition charges). Awarding academic credit based on the amount of time spent per semester in a classroom needs to be reconciled with the emphasis on learning outcomes. The challenge is to design flexible teaching and learning methods that fit with new learning modalities; whether that means radically redesigned classroom experiences for active learning or more reliance on electronic learning module and experiential learning, and a reduction of in-class time.

Challenges 4 and 5 are among the most difficult to tackle in higher education. They afford, however, an opportunity that should be grasped. Effective responses will require the following:

- Participation in the national dialogue: This means attendance at national and regional forums that focus on these issues.
- Seeking data that shed light on the specific ways that faculty members use their time.
- Gathering data from Drake University faculty members to better understand the issues.
- Using our own classrooms as laboratories for the scholarship of teaching and learning in order to contribute to the national conversation on best learning practices.
- Asking the Drake University faculty to consider revision of some factors under their control. This includes the academic calendar, promotion and tenure criteria, examination of credits required for graduation, looking at the seat time standard and other curriculum related matters.
- An exploration of how technology might aid in addressing these challenges.
- Careful attention to the national discussion about flexible appointments, including altering some long-standing rules about time requirements for tenure consideration.

ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The chapter discussing the University's activities with respect to Criterion 5 shows how Drake attempts to fulfill that special role required of institutions of higher education in a democratic society. We are firmly committed to serving the common good by advancing the quality of higher learning. In our endeavor to meet that responsibility, the University encounters the following challenges.

1. Hosting on campus community groups and events that encourage productive interactions between Drake University and a variety of organizations in central Iowa has many benefits. The challenge is to accommodate requests from community groups while protecting the core mission of the University. Drake has limited facilities available to accommodate external requests. In addition, support for activities of external groups is limited by University-related obligations and affects faculty and staff workloads. A related challenge is that some organizations expect the University to pick up the costs of activities and events.

While it may not be possible to resolve this challenge to the satisfaction of all involved parties, a recent change establishing key points of contact for groups requesting facilities access has helped. *The Strategic Enrollment and Revenue Plan* suggested establishing a central planning and events position to better coordinate such requests. It may be time to incorporate it into the operating budget. Drake also must more consistently define the parameters of available services at the beginning of any relationship.

2. The Des Moines community and central Iowa region present abundant opportunities for meaningful experiential learning. Allocating faculty time to arrange and supervise engagement and service-learning experiences and to nurture community connections poses a significant challenge.

While the University has some mechanisms in place to provide assistance in locating internships, service learning requires greater attention to the connection between formal instruction and the field experience. How can the time be found for faculty members to do that? The opportunity to address this challenge includes redefinition of faculty workload, as discussed earlier, and enhanced support from the proposed Institute for Creative Learning and Teaching.

3. Members of the Des Moines community frequently express the perception that faculty and staff members are not sufficiently involved locally. The data do not support that claim. The challenge is to bring greater visibility to the contributions Drake University faculty and staff make to the Des Moines community.

The opportunity to address this erroneous perception comes through featuring engagement and service more prominently in Drake communications. This includes publications as well as the Web site. In addition, the Drake television and radio stations need to more prominently feature these activities.

4. The central Iowa community is changing. We must continue to monitor changes in the metropolitan area, the City of Des Moines, and especially the Drake neighborhood identifying emerging needs and opportunities. The challenge for Drake is to determine the University's appropriate response.

Participation of University personnel in the Drake Neighborhood Association and President Maxwell's membership on the Board of the Greater Des Moines Partnership provide significant opportunities to keep abreast of community developments. Responses will be shaped by objectives in the new strategic plan. The Planning Council "Subcommittee on the Public Role of the University" has offered four objectives to guide the University's responses. It is likely those objectives will be modified as the planning process proceeds but it will be the responsibility of the Senior Advisory Council to ensure that there are follow-up action steps.

5. As a University that is developing a culture of evidence, we must also develop ways to assess the impact of Drake's involvement in the community. Decisions regarding the use of resources for engagement in community actions and activities must be data driven. The challenge is to develop and gather needed evidence and use it for decisions.

The existence of the Office of Institutional Research presents the opportunity to effectively address this challenge. Institutional Research personnel need to work with those involved in community activities to develop effective assessment measures.

CONCLUSION

Drake has taken tremendous strides in the last decade to become fiscally responsible, to improve facilities and enhance the learning environment, to make connections with the community and, especially, to make our mission statement into a living document that guides innovation in learning and teaching. This chapter has attempted to identify some of the challenges the University must confront in the future. How do we use these challenges to fulfill our mission? How do we realize our vision? Creatively engage the opportunities represented by these challenges? We are actively addressing these questions and are confident that we can successfully engage these challenges as we have others in the past.

