**Academic Planning Process Framework**

**What is Academic Planning?**

Academic planning outlines a college’s or university’s overall academic goals and how those goals will be met. Academic planning establishes long-term and short-term objectives to match the mission of an institution with the needs of learners. It can include academic program planning, academic structure, organizational framework, institution-wide outcomes or competencies, and division or department goals and how they align to the overall plans. **[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Academic planning as it relates to curricular planning allows us to:

* Match our academic offerings with the needs of learners
* Position CU Denver for sustainable success in the future
* Gain efficiencies in the short term

Academic planning has explicit links to, and must be congruent with, the other (currently developed or developing) plans at the institution, i.e., Strategic Enrollment Management, Student Success, Recruiting and the (Institutional) Strategic Plans.

**Recommended steps for academic planning:**

* Assemble a team within your school/college
* Review data about academic program performance (including ROI; see insight guides)
* Scan the external environment to determine larger trends that will affect CU Denver’s academic activities (market intelligence requests)
* Determine goals and create/document strategies to reach those goals
* Seek input from interested people, including coalitions of people
* Create and document action plan
* Implement, measure, and modify the action plan

**Guiding Questions**

1. **Managed Enrollment Growth Strategy Questions**

* What are the learner populations our unit’s portfolio of academic offerings target?
* Do enrollment levels in our programs confirm their alignment with the needs of our target learner populations or otherwise?
* What is the maximum enrollment growth each program in our unit can achieve realistically?
* Which existing programs can we grow immediately by removing imposed enrollment caps?
* Which existing programs must we increase investments in, redesign to grow, or sunset to achieve growth?

1. **Curricular Support for Student Persistence Questions**

* Has our unit been intentional about training and supporting our instructors?
* Does our curriculum support or hinder student progression to the credential? What must we change to facilitate student persistence or improve our students’ progression to the credential?
* Which are the courses in our unit with the highest DWF rates? Why is that the case? What do we need to do to eliminate that situation?
* Looking at our demographics, are their differential course or program outcomes based on different populations?

1. **Portfolio of Credentials Questions**

* Have we as a school/college been intentional about making our programs/credentials as accessible to the learner as possible? What stackable credentials are we considering creating?
* Have we as a school/college reconfigured our curriculum to achieve maximum flexibility for working learners? If not, how will that happen?
* Have we leveraged technologies optimally to introduce innovative ways of making our program offerings more accessible and flexible to learners? If not, how will we do so?
* What adjustments have we made to our existing credentials to make them more relevant, effective, and efficient? What new credentials/programs have we created to align with our learners’ needs?
* What new credentials/programs must we design, create, and launch? What is the market intelligence evidence for these decisions?
* Have we given full thought to developing an equity-minded set of practices to ensure all learners feel included and vested in their learning?

1. **Cost Containment Strategy Questions**

* What class size adjustments might help with cost containment across our programs and offerings?
* What faculty workload considerations (including course buy outs) do we need to take into account in our academic planning?
* What is our current ratio/mix of faculty roles and does that ratio/mix align with our future needs and cost containment strategies?
* To fulfill the same need and achieve the desired level of quality, could less money suffice?

1. **Reprioritization of Resources Questions**

* How can we implement budget reductions without severely damaging any core operations and quality?
* What retirement opportunities do we have and how do we plan to use the lines strategically?
* What do we need to stop doing or do differently to realign resources to the unit’s needs?
* What new initiatives can we engage in to achieve a better ROI?

**Background and SEM overview**

Enrollment Goal:

* **25,000 by 2030**; increasing headcount in degree program (D1) enrollment to 25,000

Retention Goals:

* **80 from 90**; overall 80 percent first-to-second-year retention achieved by 90 percent first-to-second-term persistence
* **40 in 4**; 40 percent graduation rate in 4 years (FTFY, FTIC)
* **60 in 6**; 60 percent graduation rate in 6 years (FTFY, FTIC)
* **75 Plus**; 75 -80 percent 6-year graduation rates for transfer students

SEM Plan Actions:

Action #1 – Plan for enrollment growth and student success

Action #2 – Meet students where they are

Action #3 – Close unmet need gaps

Action #4 – Level up educational attainment

Action #5 – Value all learning

Action #6 – Prepare students for a new era of work and upskilling

The rest of this document will be specific to Action #1, Plan for enrollment growth and student success and its associated strategic priority:

Strategic Priority #1: CU Denver schools and colleges must engage in academic planning that is supported by market intelligence and research, identifying their distinct and complementary growth potential for a portfolio of diverse curricular offerings—keeping in mind that “*curriculum drives enrollment, enrollment drives revenue, and revenue drives everything else****.”***[[2]](#footnote-2)

**AY 2022-2023 Academic Planning Template**

**Holistic Plan Overview**

* + 1. Current state
    2. Enrollment goals
    3. Reprioritization of resources
    4. Action plan

**Detailed View**

1. Current State
   * Bucket/categorize existing degree programs
     + Identify key areas of potential enrollment growth opportunities, elevating one or two programs for targeted investment (note targeted investment programs with “\*”)
     + Expected stable enrollment
     + Expected decrease in enrollment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Growth** | **Stable** | **Decline** |
| Sample program # 1 |  | X |  |
| Sample program # 2\* | X |  |  |
| Sample program # 3 |  |  | X |

1. Headcount Enrollment Growth Goals for Academic Year 2023-2024

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School/College** | **Distribution%** | **High** | **Medium** | **Low** | **Optimal** |
| BUSN | 25% | 375 | 300 | 200 | 250 |
| CAM | 10% | 150 | 120 | 80 | 100 |
| CAP | 7% | 105 | 84 | 56 | 70 |
| CEDC | 16% | 240 | 192 | 128 | 160 |
| CLAS | 25% | 375 | 300 | 200 | 250 |
| SEHD | 10% | 150 | 120 | 80 | 100 |
| SPA | 7% | 105 | 84 | 56 | 70 |
|  | 100% | 1,500 | 1,200 | 800 | 1,000 |

* + Existing program enrollment goals
    - Consider opportunities to improve existing offerings, including action for ineffective program enrollment, course offering & enrollment patterns (course fill rates, capacity utilization, collapsible sections), and faculty and staff ratios (workload, utilization, instructional capacity, buyouts, etc.).
  + How will you meet these goals?
    - Establish program-level goals
    - Establish student population goals, such as freshman vs. transfer, shifts in student categories, etc.
    - Identify retention goals and initiatives
    - Identify changes in pedagogy and the need for supporting facilities
    - Assess the impact of changes in enrollment, programs, or student type on support services and facilities
    - Identify changes in staffing levels and training and development needs for both academic and non-academic staff
    - Note how your plan has changed, if at all, since your August presentation (based on market intelligence or other input)
  + New program enrollment goals
    - * Consider new degree programs, certificates, or other academic offerings to be proposed, including timeline for launch, implementation team and faculty leads, and identification of necessary resources.
      * How will you meet these goals?
    - Establish program-level goals
    - Establish student population goals, such as freshman vs. transfer, shifts in student categories, etc.
    - Identify retention goals and initiatives
    - Identify any unique pedagogies and/or the need for supporting facilities
    - Identify changes in staffing levels and training and development needs for both academic and non-academic staff
    - Note how your plan has changed, if at all, since your August presentation (based on market intelligence or other input)

1. Reprioritization of resources (see guiding questions above)
2. Action Plan
   * What actions are planned at the department or program level? Please provide timelines.
   * What actions are planned at the school or college level? Please provide timelines.

1. The Society for College and University Planning: <https://www.scup.org/planning-type/academic-planning/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Michael Dolence, higher education strategist and academic innovator [↑](#footnote-ref-2)