Bridge Strategic Plan 2021-2022

APPSTATE

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Introduction

As Appalachian State University (App State) responds to and recovers from the global pandemic, we strive to make our campus stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for the future. The *Bridge Strategic Plan 2021-2022* represents a roadmap to strengthen our efforts in pursuit of a shared vision, and is designed to help us emerge a better university.

We will use insights gained during the pandemic to bring out the best in the university. As responsible stewards of our resources, App State will keep the campus infrastructure stable to appropriately meet our mission. This effort will include open assessment and clear communication of the priorities as well as the challenges and constraints associated with the major decisions ahead as we deal with budget realities.

Rationale and Process

The *Bridge Strategic Plan 2021-2022* supports critical initiatives necessary to sustain the university's mission and vision. This plan was created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide an interim roadmap to guide App State through a time of financial and societal uncertainty.

In early Fall 2020, Interim Provost Heather Norris and Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs Paul Forte charged a faculty and staff working group to develop this plan as a bridge between the most recent University Strategic Plan, *The Appalachian Experience: Envisioning a Just and Sustainable Future,* and the next five-year strategic plan, which was in development. Priorities and suggestions focusing on the near future were collected from a broad range of campus stakeholders. The working group then synthesized that information to form this plan.

The *Bridge Strategic Plan* focuses on supporting the health and well-being of students, staff, and faculty, maintaining academic excellence, and ensuring essential business operations while continuing our work toward inclusive excellence and sustainability. It is also an opportunity for the campus community to build on its collective resilience and strengths in order to innovate and thrive.

We recognize that a post-pandemic world is likely to require new technologies, processes, and expectations. Over the duration of this plan, we intend to observe, learn, and adapt to prepare App State for any new demands on higher education.

The working group has developed areas of responsibility and metrics in alignment with this process; however, these are not included in this document, since some may change over time. University Leadership will track these metrics in order to provide routine updates.

Looking forward, lessons learned during this time will inform the next five-year strategic plan to ensure our continued leadership in providing transformative educational experiences for the citizens of North Carolina and beyond.

Strategic Priorities

Campus Health, Safety, and Well-being

- Strengthen and maintain COVID-19 response
- Maintain resources that prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of all students, staff, and faculty

Focus resources on health, safety, and well-being measures in response to COVID-19 to ensure a safe campus environment.

Prioritize support for mental health resources, further development and promotion of learning opportunities, and training for health, safety, and well-being. Support flexible teaching and learning opportunities, teleworking, and professional development to strengthen work, study, and life balance.

Academic Excellence

- Enhance the student learning experience
- Provide support for excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and scholarly activities

Institutional commitment to the student experience remains strong. Continue to provide support for students in all learning environments while reestablishing in-person learning where appropriate. Support strategies to reduce inequities for student access to instructional technology tools, strengthen academic engagement, and ensure that students have access to virtual academic resources, such as tutoring and academic advising in remote learning settings. Strengthen existing programs and develop additional online and hybrid opportunities to include more co-curricular and global learning experiences for students.

Expand faculty development to include the integration of responsive and inclusive online, hybrid, and in-person learning methods that create enriching experiences for all students. Continue planning efforts supporting the post-pandemic role of online and hybrid course delivery.

Build on our momentum of fostering scholarly activities through grant writing, collaborative partnerships, intra- and inter-disciplinary mentorship, and direct engagement with virtual conferences. Enhance infrastructure for hosting virtual conferences and other learning activities and leverage wide-ranging collaborative partnerships.

Financial Resources

- Maintain student enrollment targets
- Pursue additional sources of funding

Advance student recruitment and retention initiatives to meet current and future enrollment targets. Identify markets for growth potential, including App State Online pathways and programs. Ensure resources and fundraising initiatives align with App State's commitment to support student learning experiences and a safe and healthy campus community.

Target external funding sources for merit- and need-based scholarships to support the existing and prospective student body. Focus resources to support the success of regional, national, and international grant applications. Identify additional funding opportunities to support academic excellence and other essential activities.

Ensure faculty and staff positions align with the demands of current and future student enrollment. Continue to advocate for funding model adjustments to adequately support the university's mission and provide competitive faculty and staff compensation.

Business Operations

- Continued support of the university's academic mission
- Identify efficiencies to support campus activities

Prioritize Information Technology solutions, resources, and security to support the digital teaching and learning experience for faculty and students, and teleworking for faculty and staff. Further develop Information Technology applications, systems, hardware, and training to support a flexible and streamlined end-user experience for online education and business needs. Develop an institutional teleworking policy. Develop innovations and efficiencies for institutional resources, including finances, facilities, information systems, utilities, and other campus operations. Concentrate effective coordination among academic areas, services, and facilities.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Ensure campus is an inclusive and welcoming community
- Support retention of students, staff, and faculty
- Continue recruitment efforts for students, staff, and faculty

Promote a welcoming climate for all members of the community, recognizing that students, staff, and faculty learn and work better when they feel valued. Focus continued efforts and resources toward effective students, staff, and faculty retention, recruitment, professional development, and leadership that promotes a diverse, inclusive, and equity-minded campus community. Continue to support a campus that is inclusive and equitable for all community members through further development of resources, services, policy, and programs. Improve campus and technology accessibility for all students, staff, and faculty that also addresses disability- and socioeconomic-related concerns. Develop strategies to address equity gaps in retention and other success measures for diverse students, staff, and faculty populations. Continue the integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into the curriculum.

Sustainability and Resiliency

- Prioritize sustainability initiatives that support resiliency and efficiencies in campus operations

Identify sustainability and climate action initiatives that contribute to cost savings for both the short- and long-term financial health and resilience of the university. Continue ongoing sustainability initiatives that reduce the cost of campus operations through efficiencies, and support campus resiliency and food insecurity efforts. Strengthen efforts where sustainability initiatives support and complement campus Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as campus health, safety, and well-being initiatives. Continue the integration of sustainability into the curriculum. Strengthen external funding strategies to support campus sustainability goals and commitments.