

Planning Council's Recommended Objectives for Focus in FY17

Learning.1 Assess, and improve where needed, student learning of critical knowledge and skills

Student learning is at the center of all we do at Montana State University. As we plan for FY17, Montana State will be adopting recommendations from the UPdate Core working group and looking toward our year seven NWCCU accreditation report and site visit. Student learning, its assessment, and its improvement, are central to both of those endeavors. Focusing our resources on learning outcomes is timely.

This objective was endorsed by the academic Deans and aligns with ongoing efforts to review and update curricula across campus. It is mapped to the Faculty Senate's priority of maintaining a desired student:faculty ratio in their prioritization document. The UPdate Core efforts point toward a better articulation of learning outcomes and improving assessment of those outcomes. Finally, the objective received widespread support in the questionnaire responses, across employee types and organizational units.

Discovery.1 Elevate the research excellence and recognition of our faculty

Both this and the second Discovery objective around building the research infrastructure received attention from many constituencies, but the Council chooses to elevate D.1. The Council sees this objective as overlapping or closely tied to many areas, including attracting and retaining the best faculty and staff, attracting and educating a diverse student body, and underpinning integration.

The Deans indicate Discovery is an important goal area. The Faculty Senate Prioritization Document aligns this objective with both a desired student:faculty ratio and their goal of endowed professorships. Performance funding relies in part on increases in research expenditures. Faculty and administration respondents to the questionnaire rated this objective as a high priority.

Integration.1 Increase the integration of learning, discovery, and engagement

Integration is the unique aspect of our mission and strategic plan. Timing is ideal for a focus on Integration; revision of both the departmental Role and Scope documents and the Core curriculum will have a significant impact on integrative work. To make those efforts successful, Montana State University can use this opportunity to innovate underlying support structures like promotion and tenure, formal and cultural incentives to collaborate, and workload. As with the Year of Engaged Leadership, a focus on Integration would highlight successful efforts and help the University community to better understand how each member can better integrate.

This objective received considerable attention from the academic Deans, and Faculty Senate's Prioritization Document maps this objective to their desired student:faculty ratio and suggests that tenurable faculty are well positioned to accomplish integration. The UPdate Core report indicated a significant focus on integration. Focusing on integration as we prepare our Year 7 accreditation report will also help with mission fulfillment.

Stewardship.1 Attract, develop, and retain the best faculty and staff to achieve our MSU mission

Our human resources are key to accomplishing all of the plan's goals. Certainly salary is a longstanding concern at Montana State, but attracting and retaining faculty and staff includes other efforts as well. The Council elevates this objective in an effort to address workload issues related to enrollment growth and increase faculty and staff morale. Focusing on this objective may give us an opportunity to look closely at workload, professional development, and compensation.

This objective attracts attention across constituencies. The Deans noted high quality faculty and staff are foundational to achieving all of our goals. The Faculty Senate Prioritization Document maps this objective to maintaining a desired student:faculty ratio. Questionnaire respondents of all employee types and units rated it a high priority.