

11-2015

Academic Affairs Update, November 2015

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Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.,
"Academic Affairs Update, November 2015" (2015). *Academic Affairs Update*. 7.

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*From the Office of the Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Academic Affairs Update

University of Northern Iowa



Academic Master Plan Evolves

By Kayley Lobberecht, M.A. Candidate (Post-Secondary Education) and Dr. Adrienne Lamberti

President Ruud's charge to the AcademicAffairs Division to develop an AcademicMaster Plan (AMP)—including a vision, mission, and strategic goals and outcomes—now has elicited several working drafts.

During forums scheduled throughout September 2015, over 300 faculty, staff, and students discussed four vision and mission statement drafts composed by the AMP Steering Committee, which is led by Provost and Executive Vice President Jim Wohlpart. An online forum/survey subsequently was made available as well.

Forum participants were randomly assigned to tables, where they proceeded to circle aspects of the drafts that were supported, underline content that participants believed

Migrating Knowledge from the World into the Classroom: 2015 Fall Faculty Workshop

In late August, almost 200 UNI faculty explored innovative teaching strategies during the 2015 Fall Faculty Workshop on "Improving Students' Critical Thinking Skills."

Guest speaker Dr. Susan Wolcott, an independent scholar with WolcottLynch Associates and Thought Leader for professional education at Chartered Professional Accountants-Canada, helped workshop participants explore innovative and practical ways to enhance their students' critical thinking skills.

Professors across disciplines agree that important educational outcomes include the development of critical thinking skills. However, teachers often struggle to understand the mental processes that underlie skill development and to design coursework that efficiently fosters improved student thinking.

should be included in the final version, and strike out unwanted content. In addition, a qualitative analysis was performed on the drafts, based on the circling, underlining and strikeouts.

During this process, members of each working group experienced the added benefit of sharing expert knowledge from their many disciplines, as they collaborated towards consensus when responding to vision and mission drafts.

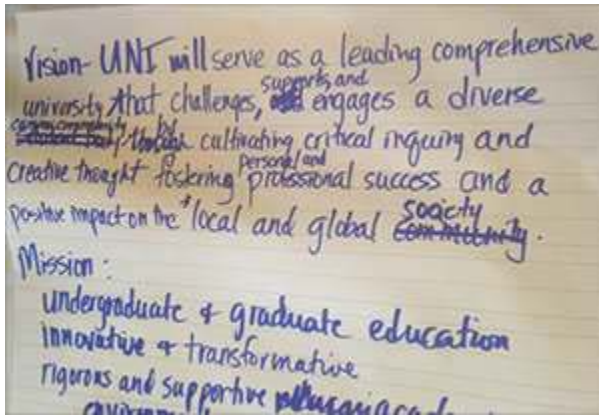
Once the working groups concluded responding to the drafts, participants were invited to circulate among all of the forum tables and comment on groups' various revisions to the drafts. Groups then reconvened to compose their own vision and mission statements.

Using the forums' data and qualitative analysis, the Committee plans to develop a penultimate mission and vision, to again be presented to the university community to solicit thoughts on the final versions.

Possible goal areas also will be developed. The Committee will be soliciting university-wide feedback on these areas and asking for volunteers to develop a draft of the strategic plan. More information will be made available before Thanksgiving.

During the workshop, participants examined desired learning outcomes for critical thinking, and learned how and why an important student characteristic—cognitive development—affects students' critical thinking performance. Participants identified patterns of thinking in students' written papers, and explored a variety of ways to scaffold improved thinking.

Topics for generating pedagogical techniques included non-academic/"real world" assignments that cultivate abilities relevant to all disciplines; for example, when students analyze texts during the process of problem solving, or examine historical precedents to strategize future decisions.



Working groups during AMP forums were asked to draft their ideal vision and mission statements.

The AMP Steering Committee

Renae Beard
Maureen Clayton
Kavita Dhanwada
John Fritch
Deedee Heistad
Carolyn Hildebrandt
Tim Kidd
Stephanie Logan
Chris Neuhaus
Patrick Pease
Amy Petersen
Dan Power
Laura Terlip
Jim Wohlpart
Kristin Woods

November 2015

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