

Building on Strengths

Programs that reflect Findlay's strategic plan

By Suzanne Wilcox English

Benchmarking, assessment and continual improvement sound more like business terms than ones associated with the halls of academe. But Daniel J. May, Ph.D., vice president for academic affairs at The University of Findlay, thinks they're a good fit.

The University of Findlay Strategic Plan for 2005-2015, launched in July 2005, includes as its first and key theme an emphasis on quality learning, scholarship and performance. Goals within that area include maintaining UF's longtime commitment to excellent teaching, fostering a culture of scholarship, research and public performance, and enhancing systems for learning and outcomes assessment.

Numbers of Programs, Students Soar

The stage was set for the new strategic plan by UF's tremendous growth in the past 25 years. The institution marked its 100th anniversary in 1982 on an enrollment upswing that continues to the present day. In 1982, full-time equivalent enrollment stood at approximately 1,200 students; now, they number more than 4,400, spread among more than 60 undergraduate majors, eight master's programs and a doctor of pharmacy.

UF had become a different institution — literally, having become a university in 1989 — and needed to determine a new direction, May said, adding that the 2005 strategic plan was the first systematic, institution-wide planning the University had done in more than a decade.

UF has retained two of its historic strengths, one-on-one faculty mentoring and new program development, he noted. In addition, faculty members regularly review and update programs, to remain current and in tune with student needs.

Assessment Leads Priorities

While many areas identified in the strategic plan are being pursued, May noted three as particular areas of emphasis: assessment, lifelong learning and intercultural communication.



“We provide extraordinarily good oversight of professional clinical areas, such as in the health professions, education, hospitality management, environmental management and many more. And historically, we’ve been quick to include new market-demand programs in response to community and regional needs.”

-Daniel J. May, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs

One important need identified by the strategic plan was benchmarking. To that end, UF took part in its first National Survey of Student Engagement last spring, which will establish a baseline for student engagement in providing a high-quality educational experience. In fall 2007, freshmen also took the Collegiate Learning Assessment, a review of general education, which seniors will take this spring. The University hopes to work with the Council of Independent Colleges to share information and examine how best to use that data.

UF is also addressing needs for lifelong learning by providing funds for additional faculty development and for information literacy. “This will include two visits by consultants, one this spring who will lead a plan to ‘re-engineer’ Shafer Library in terms of expanding information literacy skills for students and faculty, and a second next year, who will help evaluate the physical layout of the library,” May said.

A third important area of emphasis is to provide opportunities for enhancing intercultural communication and to promote diversity in hiring. The University has hosted visits from two experts in diversity and intercultural communication, one in spring 2007 and a second in fall 2007, to encourage conversations on the topic on campus.

Future Focus is on Faculty

Looking to the future, “our next major effort is to invest time and resources in faculty development,” May said, ranging from improving course content to teaching styles to delivery methods. “The goal is to continually improve the faculty’s range of skills. They also are being asked to do more both in terms of program assessment and scholarship.”

The University will also continue to add academic programs to meet market demand, especially those that complement existing strengths, May said.

The following pages examine several new academic programs and developments as UF continues to strive to meet student needs with high-quality academics and experiential learning.