



# BUFFALO STATE

The State University of New York

**SUNY's Urban-Engaged Campus**

**Strategic Plan 2016–2021**

## **Mission and History**

Buffalo State College is the largest comprehensive college in the SUNY system, with a long history of providing outstanding undergraduate and graduate education. Established in 1871 as the Buffalo Normal School, Buffalo State has grown from an institution primarily dedicated to training teachers for Buffalo's growing population to a large comprehensive college with programs in education, liberal arts and sciences, and professional studies.

Buffalo State is a diverse and inclusive college committed to the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our mission is to provide a meaningful and relevant education that empowers students to succeed and inspires a lifelong passion for learning. Buffalo State is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, service, scholarship, creative activity, and cultural enrichment.

Our location within the city of Buffalo's museum district and arts corridor is bordered by distinctive and emerging neighborhoods that enable students to participate in nationally recognized community engagement and service experiences in an urban setting. Buffalo State's diverse student population, engaged and exceptional faculty, wide range of academic programs, and applied-learning opportunities create a unique community of scholars where lives are transformed.

## **Mission**

Buffalo State is a diverse and inclusive college committed to the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our mission is to empower students to succeed and to inspire a lifelong passion for learning. Buffalo State is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, service, scholarship, creative activity, and cultural enrichment.

## **Vision**

**Buffalo State College will be a nationally recognized leader in public higher education known for**

- its caring and rigorous academic environment where lives are transformed through education;
- the intellectual and creative accomplishments of its faculty, staff, students, and alumni;
- its cross-culturally competent community dedicated to developing leaders for an increasingly global society.

## Values

**We, the Buffalo State community, are committed to**

- actively facilitating access to public higher education;
- excellent learning experiences in and out of the classroom;
- being student centered;
- the rigors, joys, and fulfillment of intellectual discovery;
- engagement, applied learning, and partnerships with the community;
- social responsibility;
- respect for diversity and individual differences;
- supportive and collegial relationships;
- opportunities for individuals to realize their full potential.

## Introduction

Reflecting the value of shared governance at Buffalo State College, the process used in creating the 2016–2021 strategic plan was transparent and collaborative, involving participants from all corners of the campus. Over the course of several months, members of the College Planning Council (CPC) conducted more than 20 SWOT sessions with diverse interest groups representing students, staff, faculty, administrators, board members, and community representatives. Additionally, the CPC held multiple open sessions on campus. In an effort to ensure wide participation, the committee placed all meeting summaries and drafts of the strategic plan online for public review and comment.

What emerged from these extensive conversations was a common belief that Buffalo State occupies a distinct and important place in the educational community; while significant challenges lie ahead, the college is committed to fulfilling its important role in transforming the lives of our students. Our overarching goal is to be the institution of first choice for students, faculty, and staff. To do so, we will carry out the following:

**Educate** students through rigorous and engaging academic programs.

**Create** an engaged campus community that fosters civic responsibility.

**Enhance** institutional effectiveness.

**Provide** appropriate facilities and resources to support all activities.

The central mission of Buffalo State College is to educate students, and it is clear that the college is in high demand. The college received a record number of applications for the freshman class, rising from just over 7,000 for the fall 2013 entering class to more than 9,000 for the fall 2015 class. This high demand is also reflected in record first-year enrollments in both 2014 and 2015.

Despite the current high demand for Buffalo State, a number of long-term demographic trends will present significant challenges for enrollment over the next five years. According to a report from the New York State Education Department, the number of high school graduates in New York State is expected to fall 16.5 percent from a high in 2008 through 2019. Erie County is

projected to have an even greater decline of 17.7 percent. As the number of prospective students is shrinking, competition from other colleges and universities is increasing. The Western New York Consortium of Higher Education consists of 21 institutions, and Erie County alone is home to 12. The proliferation of available online programs has introduced an entirely different type of competition.

While the number of high school graduates steadily declines, the importance of achieving a college degree for the long-term economic security of individuals and their families has never been greater. This is especially true for first-generation college students, whose successful completion of a high-quality academic degree program can truly transform an entire family. Recognizing the connection between college completion and the long-term outlook for individuals and for the state of New York, SUNY's chancellor recently committed to increasing the number of degrees awarded annually through SUNY schools from 90,000 to 150,000 by 2020. Given the general demographic decline of high school graduates, the only way to achieve this important goal is to increase retention, persistence, and graduation rates.

In order to remain the institution of first choice for our students, Buffalo State must continue to offer a superior educational experience that meets the demands of contemporary society. But maintaining the status quo is not sufficient; we must offer a distinctive education that stands out from the numerous colleges that surround us. One of the most important strengths of Buffalo State is the growing diversity represented in our campus community. The student population has witnessed the most dramatic change in the last five years, moving from a fall 2011 enrollment where the diverse-student population was 30 percent to a fall 2015 enrollment where the representation grew to 48 percent. Students who choose to enroll at Buffalo State will have the distinct advantage of learning with and from a much more diverse population, one that better reflects the world in which they will one day work and lead.

To reap the full benefits of this diversity, however, Buffalo State must build on existing strengths and identify new opportunities emerging from a rapidly changing society. Given the dramatic change in the demographics of our student population, and indeed the changing demographics nationwide, the college must examine every aspect of its educational offerings from the general education curriculum to the academic majors and graduate programs to determine whether new programs that are consistent with the college's mission might attract new students to the campus. Interdisciplinary programs in areas such as sustainability, conflict resolution, and community health could build on existing strengths of the faculty and would help distinguish the college from its nearby peers.

The physical location of the college presents an ideal environment where Buffalo State can continue to put the values of community engagement, diversity, and service learning into action. Our urban setting fosters an environment where the city becomes the classroom and academic programs can move beyond the campus buildings and into the surrounding neighborhoods. Within a short walk of the center of campus is a rich tapestry of art museums, restaurants, and businesses bustling with people speaking dozens of languages, all calling Buffalo home. As an anchor institution for the city, Buffalo State takes seriously its role in improving the community through responsible stewardship of our human and financial resources, and fully embraces its

mission as SUNY's urban-engaged campus.

## **GOALS FOR 2016–2021**

### **Goal 1: Provide an Excellent Education Inside and Outside the Classroom**

#### **Focus Area 1: Create Engaging and Distinctive Academic Programming**

Buffalo State College is known for its student-centered learning environment, where faculty members work closely with students in pursuit of academic excellence. Our general education curriculum is steeped in the liberal arts tradition and designed to introduce students to a breadth of knowledge, while upper-level coursework allows students to develop a deep understanding of their chosen academic fields. Students wishing to pursue an education in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) fields can choose from multiple programs and work directly with faculty in laboratory settings. Buffalo State is home to many unique academic programs; here, students can find an outstanding education in traditional fields of education, liberal arts, and sciences, or can enter into programs unique to the college, such as fashion and textile technology. Buffalo State's art conservation graduate program is one of only four in the entire country, and our International Center for Studies in Creativity offers graduate and undergraduate programs in creativity that are internationally recognized for excellence. The Anne Frank Project merges themes of social justice and conflict resolution in communities and schools worldwide.

Our Undergraduate Research Office offers a highly regarded program that engages students in research and creative activities early in their academic careers. Students work directly with faculty to conduct research during the academic year or the summer. Each year, more than 400 students present their work at the Student Research and Creativity Celebration, an academic conference held on campus. Participation in research or creative studies is a key contributor to student retention and graduation, and Buffalo State must look to expand this highly successful program over the duration of the strategic plan.

The Muriel A. Howard Honors Program is another area of academic excellence at Buffalo State. Since 1984, the honors program has challenged high-achieving students to join a scholarly community where critical thinking and challenging coursework are embraced. After more than 30 years, however, it is time to assess whether the curriculum and structures of the honors program continue to meet the needs of current and future students. The creation of an Honors College, which would house the honors program, offers an opportunity to expand the rigorous and engaging teaching of honors to a wider audience. Additionally, an Honors College would be an ideal home to prepare outstanding students to succeed in applying for nationally competitive scholarships such as the Fulbright, Rhodes, or Truman. Just as we must build an infrastructure to support students who need academic assistance to succeed in their coursework, we must also commit to offering an engaging and challenging academic experience to highly prepared students.

One of the most life-changing experiences for many students is the opportunity to study abroad. Buffalo State is home to the Siena program, the oldest study-abroad program in SUNY. In recent

years, our students have traveled throughout the globe to study in numerous countries, including China, Zambia, Chile, Turkey, and Rwanda. The number of Buffalo State students who study abroad is small, however, representing roughly 1 percent of our undergraduates annually. Given the transformative effect of studying abroad, we must work to ensure that students are not prevented from participating in programs because of financial need. Semester-long programs should be negotiated to cost no more than the current tuition, room, and board at Buffalo State, plus the cost of transportation. An increased number of short-term programs in summer and winter sessions would also allow more students to participate in international study. In addition to reducing the cost of international programs, the college should identify funds to help support students who otherwise could not afford to study abroad.

All these outstanding educational programs at Buffalo State and many others not mentioned here are indicative of a vibrant academic community where our shared values of excellence, engagement, and social responsibility permeate the campus. As it is currently constructed, however, our curriculum does not guarantee that every Buffalo State student will have the opportunity to participate in one of our distinctive programs or engage in high-impact practices such as applied learning, learning communities, or supplemental instruction. We must commit to developing an undergraduate curriculum that seamlessly incorporates these activities to make them a fundamental component of a Buffalo State education. To do so, we must meaningfully and substantially reform our general education program to offer a coherent, rigorous, and intellectually powerful curriculum that prepares all students for the demands of contemporary society, regardless of their major.

Graduate education is rapidly increasing in importance nationally, as our knowledge-based economy requires mastery of specialized content and skills. Many fields now require a master's degree as an entry-level credential, where only a decade ago a bachelor's degree would have sufficed. Buffalo State's graduate enrollment has experienced a steady decline in recent years, as the nationwide drop in students pursuing education degrees has had a significant impact on our programs. While we do expect a gradual increase in these areas going forward, we must also develop new programs that are in high demand and consistent with our mission. Recently developed programs such as the professional science master's (PSM) in professional applied and computational mathematics have shown great promise, as has the new master's in public relations. Our location offers ideal opportunities to develop distinct programs of interest surrounding the burgeoning blue economy and the urban environment.

1.1 Evaluate undergraduate curriculum to determine whether it is reflective of contemporary social, cultural, and economic environments.

- 1.1.1 Fully develop the distinctiveness of a Buffalo State education through a revised general education curriculum, building on Buffalo State's programs of distinction, the diversity of our community, and our urban setting.
- 1.1.2 Value faculty engagement in the general education curriculum through the tenure and promotion process.

- 1.1.3 Adopt all-college learning outcomes that respond to twenty-first-century trends, leverage existing strengths, and result in a distinctive framework for undergraduate education at Buffalo State.
  - 1.1.4 Create more undergraduate certificate programs.
  - 1.1.5 Reinvigorate evening and weekend programs.
- 1.2 Create specialized college programs within undergraduate education that provide high-ability students, both intellectual and entrepreneurial, with individualized attention and challenge.
- 1.2.1 Create Honors College.
    - 1.2.1.1 Evaluate honors curriculum and develop new program consistent with a contemporary honors college.
    - 1.2.1.2 Support a nationally competitive scholarships program.
  - 1.2.2 Explore the creation of a cross-disciplinary undergraduate program that aligns with SUNY's strategic desire to better prepare students for the entrepreneurial century.
    - 1.2.2.1 Pilot-test a specialized program for students who show high potential in the areas of creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership.
- 1.3 Ensure that every student engages in multiple high-impact practices during his or her academic career.
- 1.3.1 Develop a comprehensive retention, engagement, and persistence framework to ensure that high-impact practices are delivered effectively.
  - 1.3.2 Offer an applied-learning experience for every Buffalo State student.
  - 1.3.3 Increase the number of opportunities for integrated learning, including learning communities.
  - 1.3.4 Increase opportunities for undergraduate research.
  - 1.3.5 Develop a supplemental instruction (SI) program.
  - 1.3.6 Include faculty participation in high-impact practices into evaluations.
- 1.4 Increase distance-education presence to enhance student success and address the academic needs of targeted subgroups.
- 1.4.1 Establish oversight for management of distance-education presence.
  - 1.4.2 Identify opportunities to facilitate degree completion through distance-education offerings.
  - 1.4.3 Prioritize course-development efforts through analysis of degree audits and student exit surveys.

1.4.4 Explore potential for stackable distance-education certificate programs.

1.5 Increase affordable international experiences.

1.5.1 Closely align cost of attendance on campus with costs abroad.

1.5.2 Increase number of short-term study-abroad programs.

1.5.3 Increase funding to support students studying abroad.

1.6 Strategically expand graduate programs.

1.6.1 Evaluate existing graduate programs to determine whether they continue to generate sufficient student interest to remain viable.

1.6.2 Identify new opportunities for graduate programs consistent with our mission and capitalizing on our urban location.

1.6.3 Pursue innovative structures, such as stackable graduate certificates, 4+1 programs, 3+2 international programs, and executive models of delivery.

## **Focus Area 2: Enhance Academic Support Services**

Reflecting nationwide trends, a growing number of students arrive at Buffalo State underprepared for the rigorous academic challenges ahead. We must provide sufficient resources so that students who matriculate at Buffalo State have the support necessary to succeed. As part of the SUNY Excels goal of 150,000 degrees by 2020, the college has committed to raising its retention and graduation rates significantly during the duration of the strategic plan. Our first-year retention rate currently fluctuates around 74 percent but has dropped in recent years; the new target aims for 79 percent of the first-time, full-time freshmen who begin classes in fall 2019 to return in fall 2020. Buffalo State is also committed to raising the graduation rate and the total number of undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded by 2020.

To achieve these goals, we must reinvigorate our existing academic and student support services and invest in innovative technologies that will assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating the complexities of successful college completion. Buffalo State offers a wide variety of academic support services, but there is often little coordination across programs. All areas of the college play a major role in this effort; therefore, we must assess all academic support programs, including programs currently administered across the institution, to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness.

One of the key strategies to improve students' academic success is to centralize academic support programs in the Academic Achievement Center (AAC) in E. H. Butler Library. The AAC will serve as a one-stop shop for students seeking academic assistance in math, writing, or general study skills, and will also serve as the new home for the Disability Services Office. Here, students struggling with academic difficulties and high-achieving students who are looking to build on their existing skills will find services designed to assist them. Co-location in the library

will allow for greater coordination and collaboration among support programs to assist students with multiple needs.

As we build the new physical location for face-to-face academic support, we must also consider the needs of our online students. Students taking coursework at a distance must have access to the same level of academic support as those on the home campus. The Virtual Concierge project will allow easy access to academic support services as well as critical offices such as Admissions and Registrar for students at a distance and on campus.

Another area in need of significant attention to improve student success at Buffalo State is academic advising. Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective, intrusive academic advising provided early in a student's academic career is one of the most important factors leading to student retention and graduation. Good advising goes beyond course scheduling to develop a mentoring relationship, where academic and career goals are carefully considered and guided. Colleges and universities that have renewed attention to high-quality, intrusive advising have seen dramatic increases in student satisfaction, retention, and graduation rates.

Academic advisement at Buffalo State is inconsistent—some individual faculty members and departments do an outstanding job of advising their students while others fall short. Part of the difficulty is structural—departments with large numbers of majors and fewer faculty members cannot possibly devote personalized attention to every student under the current advising model. Another part of the difficulty is cultural—some faculty and departments simply do not value advising at the same level as teaching, scholarship, and service. The college must commit to solving both of these problems to best serve our students.

Predictive analytics programs have shown great promise for identifying students who may potentially be at risk of attrition. Simply predicting whether a student is high risk is not enough, however, and we must create a concurrent program of prescriptive analytics that identify which specific interventions would be expected to be successful for an individual student. These tools must be user friendly to garner widespread use. Faculty must remain at the center of academic advising at Buffalo State, but to best serve our students, we must supplement the efforts of our faculty with professional advisers and technological solutions.

Finally, with a growing number of international students in undergraduate and graduate programs, Buffalo State must work to ensure that they have the resources they need to succeed. International students often require academic support from specialists trained in working with students for whom English is a second language. Some international students may also have difficulty transitioning to the culture of the American classroom; professional development workshops designed to help faculty ease this transition for our students can be an important strategy to increase international student success.

1.7 Assess existing academic support services to determine effectiveness and identify any gaps.

1.8 Build Academic Achievement Center in Butler Library.



1.8.1 Launch Virtual Concierge to provide students seeking assistance in critical services 24/7 support.

1.9 Reinvigorate academic advising.

1.9.1 Ensure that advising is considered in faculty tenure and promotion, and that excellence in advising is a valued goal for all faculty members.

1.9.2 Develop predictive analytics tools to identify at-risk students.

1.9.3 Prepare students to understand their role in the advising process, including use of the technologies available to assist them.

1.10 Maximize use of technology to provide real-time academic support according to student need.

1.11 Provide academic support for international undergraduate and graduate students.

### **Focus Area 3: Strengthen and Diversify the Faculty**

Buffalo State College's faculty are widely recognized for their commitment to scholarship, creative activities, service, and above all else, teaching excellence. While part-time faculty serve an important role on any campus, full-time, tenure-track faculty are critical to sustaining the academic mission of the college. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty at Buffalo State has slowly declined in the last five years, from 366 in fall 2011 to 341 in fall 2015. While the student headcount has also declined by roughly 5 percent in the last five years, the reliance on part-time faculty to teach classes has increased. As part-time faculty members do not generally have advising or service responsibilities, this shift places a greater burden on full-time faculty to complete necessary work. To become an institution of first choice for students, Buffalo State must commit to hiring highly qualified teacher-scholars and to provide the resources necessary for their success. The evaluation of whether a full-time faculty position is warranted must be grounded in a holistic approach, considering budgetary realities, enrollments, future academic needs, and service to the community as important factors.

Additionally, the college must work to build a faculty whose diversity is more reflective of the students they teach. While the student population has become increasingly diverse, the diversity among tenured and tenure-track faculty has not significantly changed. As the college endeavors to replace retiring professors with full-time faculty wherever feasible, special attention must be paid to attracting faculty from diverse backgrounds. To that end, the college should use proven strategies such as an ABD fellows program, pre-tenure course releases, and spousal hiring to attract highly qualified, diverse faculty. We must also commit to expanding the pipeline of future faculty from diverse backgrounds, particularly in fields where there is little diversity among doctoral students, through continued participation in the McNair Scholars Program and through mentoring our own graduate students for doctoral studies.

- 1.12 Commit to hiring full-time faculty when feasible and where enrollment levels support the need.
- 1.13 Use multiple strategies to recruit, hire, retain, tenure, and promote diverse faculty.
- 1.14 Increase support for faculty research, grant, creative, and professional development activities.
- 1.15 Increase the pay of part-time faculty to that of our peer institutions.

#### **Focus Area 4: Support Staff Development**

The staff at Buffalo State plays an important role in the mission of the college, in many cases working directly with students in ways that are critical to their success. Highly trained professional staff members interact with students from the moment they become prospective students to the day they graduate in diverse areas including enrollment, advisement, health, athletics, computing, technology, and the library. Professionals in the Career Development Center prepare students for real-world service and employment while staff members in the Alumni Affairs Office continue to work with former students long after they have left campus. Recruiting and retaining professional staff who share Buffalo State's mission and dedication to student development is a crucial element of the overall effort to transform student lives.

Other staff members perform important duties less directly related to the academic enterprise, but nonetheless are significant for the overall impact on campus life. Maintaining the buildings and grounds and providing a physical environment conducive to the wide variety of activities that take place on a college campus are critical to making Buffalo State the institution of first choice for students, faculty, and staff.

The Professional Development Center supports the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of faculty and staff, offering numerous workshops and leadership development opportunities throughout the year. Buffalo State can capitalize on the expertise of our own staff by providing clear avenues for career advancement on campus.

An analysis of the staffing levels over the previous five years shows a steady increase in UUP professional staff and a relatively flat number of classified employees. Raw numbers cannot account for staffing levels in particular areas, however, and a comprehensive and transparent assessment of overall campus staffing can help identify areas of specific need to fulfill Buffalo State's mission.

- 1.16 Support professional development.
- 1.17 Evaluate staffing levels and job duties across campus to determine appropriate targets.

## **Goal 2: Continue to Create an Engaged Community**

Despite the significant decline in the number of high school graduates nationally and regionally in recent years, Buffalo State College continues to attract well-qualified students. Meeting our enrollment goals in a challenging environment requires the commitment of the entire campus community. Faculty and staff working together for prospective student outreach and events such as Open House can help present a unified effort to attract new students. There are many reasons students initially enroll in college, but one of the most important reasons they stay is that they have developed a sense of belonging. It is the job of all Buffalo State employees to contribute to creating a community where students of all backgrounds feel they belong and can thrive.

Collaborative efforts between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs can be especially effective in recruiting students to campus and retaining them once they have arrived. Learning communities, for example, combine the strengths of Residence Life programming with specialized academic courses designed for first-year students. Cultural and academic programming outside the classroom can extend student learning beyond the confines of their specific majors to broaden their perspectives, but only if students actually attend these events. One strategy to increase student involvement is the cultural laureate program, where students who attend a specified number of events achieve the designation of cultural laureate and are acknowledged as such at Commencement.

Given the large number of competing higher education institutions in the area immediately around Buffalo State, it is especially important that our on-campus experience meets and exceeds student needs. The large freshman enrollments in recent years, combined with renovations that have taken some residence halls offline, have placed significant burdens on our ability to house students on campus. While the completion of projects in our Housing Master Plan will eventually ease this pressure, we must work to minimize the impact on students and ensure that those housed off campus remain engaged in campus life. Dining services are not traditionally viewed as recruitment or retention priorities, but students have identified the quality and availability of food on campus as a significant concern that must be addressed.

### **Focus Area 1: Recruit New Students for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

Creating a distinct and rigorous academic program is ultimately meaningless if Buffalo State does not recruit students to enroll in our courses. As the number of high school graduates continues to decline in Western New York, we must look to recruit other populations of well-qualified undergraduate and graduate students. Academic programming designed for specific groups such as dual-enrolled high school students or adults looking to complete their degrees can be an important part of an overall enrollment strategy. Increasing the number of international students has the added positive impact of internationalizing the Buffalo State experience for all students.

#### **2.1 Develop Enrollment Master Plan.**

- 2.1.1 Determine the optimum enrollment that will allow for more predictable resource determination and maintenance of high-quality academic standards in our programs.
- 2.1.2 Develop benchmarks and monitor key performance indicators for the recruitment of students.
- 2.1.3 Identify new cohorts of students and provide access to educational opportunities.
- 2.1.4 Develop a plan to recruit and provide greater support for students with learning differences.

2.2 Use new recruiting strategies consistent with the college mission.

- 2.2.1 Augment the use of technology to reach prospective students and other audiences.
- 2.2.2 Increase opportunities for dual-credit courses to area high school students.
- 2.2.3 Strengthen the pathway to Buffalo State College through cooperative work with Precollegiate Programs and expansion of the Buffalo State Challenge Program.
- 2.2.4 Explore the addition of athletics programs that have demonstrated ability to attract new students.
- 2.2.5 Incorporate early-outreach strategies by expanding recruiting efforts to engage middle school through high school students.
- 2.2.6 Develop a marketing plan specifically focused on student recruitment.

## **Focus Area 2: Provide an Outstanding On-Campus Student Experience**

As we work to inculcate a feeling of belonging for our students, we must strive to create a welcoming atmosphere on campus. In recent years, some Buffalo State students have had to be housed off campus to accommodate a demand for housing that exceeds our current inventory. As we work to address the shortage, we should also assess the current programming available for students living in our residence halls. Learning communities and faculty mentor programs can help bring an academic focus to residence hall activity.

Dining facilities have a significant impact on student satisfaction and have demonstrated potential for increasing the number of students who are interested in enrolling at the college. Student surveys have consistently shown dissatisfaction with the dining services on campus, and we should take these complaints seriously. With an increasingly diverse student body, providing many dining options that embrace multiple culinary traditions offers an opportunity to make the campus feel more like home while introducing students to new cultures.

Finally, Buffalo State must develop a clear understanding of the mental and health needs of our students. An increasing number of students are coming to college with significant mental health issues that can present a serious impediment to academic success. Problems such as mental illness, dealing with trauma and loss, alcohol and substance use, and interpersonal violence all

require sufficient numbers of qualified professional staff to address student needs in a timely manner. Greater partnerships among Weigel Health Center, the Counseling Center, and Academic Affairs can result in high-quality cocurricular programming necessary to support academic and personal success for all our students.

2.3 Work to address housing shortages by implementing the Housing Master Plan.

2.4 Enhance dining venues, explore potential new venues, and increase variety of menu options.

2.4.1 Seek ways to provide dining options for a diverse population.

2.5 Enhance the residential education program to ensure greater faculty involvement and engagement.

2.6 Assess adequacy of critical student services, such as the Counseling Center and Weigel Health Center.

### **Focus Area 3: Support an Engaging Cocurricular Program**

Creating an engaging campus experience requires collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. For example, the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center (VSLC) is a key successful collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs that has provided academic service-learning and cocurricular volunteer experiences to the campus and community. Learning communities combine the strengths of Residence Life programming with specialized academic courses designed for first-year students. Residence halls are more than just a place where students live; they are a place where social activities occur, where faculty and students can interact outside the classroom, and where we can engage students in the academic experience of Buffalo State College. The residential student experience is driven by the quality of the facilities student inhabit and the programs in which they participate; therefore, enhancements to residence hall facilities and programs are essential.

We must also pay attention to the college's large population of transfer and commuter students. Transfer students often have a difficult time adjusting to the academic demands of their new college, and they are also less likely to engage in extracurricular activities that help foster a sense of belonging. While Buffalo State has worked hard to develop seamless transfer programs with other institutions, encouraging interaction at the academic department level can help alleviate the "transfer shock" that is prevalent nationwide.

All too often, commuter students come to campus to partake in classroom activities without participating in what is offered outside the classroom. An area where we can be intentional and perhaps distinctive is to increase the participation of our commuter students in campus shared governance. One strategy to increase participation would be to designate seats for commuter and transfer students on committees, boards, and task forces and measure its success by whether

commuter students occupy those seats and continue their service. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs can work closely to ensure that more commuter and transfer students find their way to these opportunities.

2.7 Create student cultural laureate program.

2.8 Increase opportunities for civic engagement and service learning.

2.8.1 Develop civic engagement action plan.

2.9 Assess commuter student participation across the spectrum of activities and shared governance at the college.

2.10 Assess the experiences of transfer students and develop programs specifically targeted to their needs.

2.10.1 Work with community colleges to identify obstacles to student success and better align academic curricula.

#### **Focus Area 4: Serve as an Anchor Institution**

Buffalo State has a significant presence in Buffalo, Western New York, New York State, and the world. It is a center of culture, learning, and innovation. Our programs, along with our faculty and students, continue to play a vital and active role in the renewal and revitalization of our community and those we serve. As an anchor institution for the city of Buffalo, we must simultaneously make our presence felt in the city and welcome the community onto our campus.

2.11 Capitalize on the urban location for academic and cocurricular programming.

2.12 Connect procurement to local vendors where possible.

2.13 Participate in the Start-Up NY initiative and evaluate its success in engaging students and faculty.

2.14 Capitalize on various cultural initiatives, including the art corridor and the Niagara Street Gateway.

2.15 Maintain Carnegie Community Engaged Campus designation.

2.16 Assess the capacity of the Buffalo State Child Care Center, and consider expanding services to the neighboring community.

2.17 Develop more robust summer programming for students and community members.

2.17.1 Increase the number of summer camps, professional meetings, and continuing education opportunities to make the summer a vibrant time on campus.

### **Focus Area 5: Safeguard Our Physical and Human Resources**

Buffalo State College is an open and welcoming campus, and is not immune to the safety challenges of any urban environment. While the perception of criminal activity is often much greater than the actual occurrence of criminal behavior, we must work to minimize any safety concerns for students, employees, and visitors. To do so, we must make efficient use of our well-trained and professional police force to engage the entire campus in a community policing model. The University Police Department must have sufficient resources in staffing and technology to create both the reality and the perception of safety on campus. Additionally, we must work to diversify the ranks of UPD to be better reflective of the campus. While we must be mindful of the civil service requirements that govern the hiring of police officers, the Criminal Justice Department can play a significant role in increasing the pipeline of potential officers.

While the safety of community members and visitors is a priority, more attention must be paid to the physical environs of the campus. A sense of pride in our surroundings is a critical piece of developing a sense of belonging. Greening and beautification initiatives can be an integral component of the campus commitment to sustainability and reflect the excellence we demand in all aspects of Buffalo State College.

2.18 Fully realize the community-oriented policing philosophy.

2.19 Diversify the University Police Department to be more reflective of the community.

2.20 Provide sufficient resources to ensure a safe environment for the campus community.

2.21 Make campus beautification a priority.

2.21.1 Explore service-learning opportunities to develop sustainable green spaces.

### **Goal 3: Enhance Institutional Effectiveness**

Buffalo State's ability to offer an outstanding education to its students requires many moving parts all working in tandem. The behind-the-scenes work involved in everything from

maintaining the website to disbursing financial aid plays a significant role in the success of the institution and ultimately of its students. One of the benefits of working in higher education is that we are surrounded by experts in their fields. Buffalo State can maximize institutional effectiveness by harnessing the expertise and talents of members of our own community to help fulfill our mission.

### **Focus Area 1: Tell Our Story Externally**

Buffalo State College has a tremendous story to tell, and we must renew efforts to ensure that our story is heard. The college's website—the virtual front door to the campus—received 4,178,497 unique visits in 2014–2015. Prospective students, employees, and the public at large often develop an initial impression of the college on the website alone. Given its critical importance, the college must determine the best use for the website and focus its design accordingly.

In order to tell its story more widely, the college must commit to increasing the marketing budget and deploying the funds strategically. As competition for students has increased dramatically in the last decade, Buffalo State's marketing budget has remained stagnant. In addition to traditional and new media, our marketing publications program for Admissions, Alumni, and Academic Affairs continues to require stable funding and creative approaches. Video content (for use on the web, social media, television, streaming networks, mobile, e-communication, and live presentations) is a critical component in telling the story of the people, programs, and traditions of Buffalo State. Dedicated funding for staff who will focus on authentic, genuine video communication for Buffalo State marketing efforts is essential and has been increasing in need for years.

While a dedicated team of marketing professionals is a critical component of telling our story, we also have a tremendous team of largely untapped experts who are the best advocates for Buffalo State: our students, staff, faculty, and alumni. We must deploy those who can speak most directly about the Buffalo State experience to engage with prospective students, legislators, and supporters of the college.

- 3.1 Assess the website to determine current and future use and maximize its value to different user groups.
- 3.2 Evaluate the marketing budget to determine the proper appropriation for strategic goals.
- 3.3 Engage students, staff, faculty, and alumni in advocacy efforts.
- 3.4 Augment the use of technology to reach prospective students and other audiences.

### **Focus Area 2: Promote Fiscal Transparency**



One of the hallmarks of shared governance is a commitment to transparency at all levels of the institution, including fiscal matters. As resources have become increasingly tight, it is more important than ever to be strategic with the use of limited funds. An all-funds budgeting process would allow greater participation in the construction and review of the college budget but must be accompanied by sufficient training for faculty, staff, and administrators. A transparent annual budgeting process connected directly to the strategic plan will increase the community's confidence in the judicious use of funds. One way to help demonstrate accountability and transparency is through the creation of an online strategic planning and budgeting system that would assign financial resources to initiatives identified in the strategic plan and be reviewed annually by the campus community.

3.5 Move to all-funds budgeting process to increase transparency and strategic use of funds.

3.6 Adopt annual budget planning cycle to facilitate campuswide participation and to support funding prioritization.

3.7 Create online strategic planning and budgeting system to connect initiatives in the strategic plan with funding necessary to achieve the goals.

### **Focus Area 3: Ensure Data Integrity**

Data analysis has become an increasingly important aspect of decision making at all levels of higher education, from academic advising to budgeting. The growing reliance on data requires greater assurance that the data itself be accurate and that those using the data to make decisions be properly trained in its use.

3.8 Transform data into actionable information to drive decision-making processes; ensure streamlined and reliable access to data and information for faculty and staff to empower them to fulfill their roles.

### **Focus Area 4: Enhance Culture of Continuous Improvement**

Receiving constructive feedback on job performance is an important part of ensuring institutional effectiveness in fulfilling our mission to educate students. A consistent program of evaluation can help identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, and should not be viewed or used as a punitive measure; rather, the regular reflection on our own performance should model the same values of continuous improvement and lifelong learning that we strive to develop in our students.

3.9 Develop regular evaluation process for all employees, including administrators and tenured faculty.

### **Focus Area 5: Foster Sustainability**

The college's commitment to social justice must include sustainability as an overarching practice. Many of our institutional processes rely heavily on the use of paper products and could

be more efficiently managed through electronic systems. Sustainability should be a consideration in all Buffalo State operations, from academic programming to building and grounds maintenance.

3.10 Move all paper processes to electronic where possible.

3.11 Incorporate ethic of environmental stewardship into institutional practices.

#### **Goal 4: Provide Appropriate Resources Necessary to Succeed**

Finally, the success of many of the strategic plan's goals rests on the campus's ability to secure the required financial resources. As state funding for public higher education institutions is cut throughout the country, we must continue to advocate the importance of public universities and demonstrate that an investment of state dollars in Buffalo State College is an investment in the long-term welfare of the state of New York.

In addition to advocating increased public funding of the college, we must work to increase private giving to meet our strategic priorities. Buffalo State's Development Office has done a tremendous job in marshaling the support of alumni, foundations, and friends of the college. As we look forward to launching a new campaign during the period encompassed in this strategic plan, campuswide participation will demonstrate a commitment to the mission and goals of Buffalo State College.

While we look to find ways to increase funding, we must be effective stewards of the resources we have. The all-funds budgeting process will help identify resources and needs across campus; prioritizing spending will be an important component. One concern that must be addressed is the aging facilities throughout the campus, especially where their condition affects the academic mission. Upton Hall, for example, requires immediate attention to provide a sufficient facility where our faculty can teach and our students can learn.

4.1 Address aging facilities throughout campus including both academic and support areas.

4.1.1 Continue to evaluate and implement the Facilities Master Plan in accordance with funding availability and strategic priorities.

4.1.2 Prioritize academic facilities for renovation or replacement.

4.2 Seek increased funding through state appropriations and SUNY.

4.3 Tie development targets to strategic priorities.

4.4 Reduce ancillary costs to students through increased use of open educational resources or low-cost alternatives to textbooks when faculty members determine that educational outcomes for students will not be adversely affected.