

# 2022 NECHE Self Study Projections

## *Status Summary: August 2024*

### **Standard 1 Mission and Purpose**

1. University leadership, led by the Associate Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning (AVPIRP), will create a review cycle for the Mission, Vision, and Core Values, which will be submitted to governance by May 2022. The proposal will call for a review of the Mission Statement no later than May 2024, in advance of the next Strategic Plan. **Completed**

*A ten-year review cycle was approved by campus governance in Spring 2023 and the Mission Review Committee was convened in November of 2023. Due to the announced retirement of the university's president, it was determined that the committee would limit the scope of its work in advance of the new president. Additional information and a summary report of the committee's findings and recommendations can be found on the [Mission Review webpage](#).*

### **Standard 2 Planning and Evaluation**

1. Long-term divisional plans will be developed no later than calendar year 2022, to be in line with the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Moving forward, all divisional plans will be finalized and published within one year of new strategic plan.

*A 2021-2025 Academic Plan was completed, passed through campus governance and presented to the Board of Trustees (BOT) in AY22. A 2022-2025 Student Affairs Plan was completed and presented to the BOT in AY23. An Information Technology Plan which was reviewed by the Technology Advisory Committee (TAC) was completed in AY23 and will be updated annually.*

### **Standard 3 Organization and Governance**

1. The Board, in consultation with the President, will finalize a plan to secure an external perspective on board effectiveness to be conducted by the end of Spring 2023.

*An external consultant was engaged for the August 2024 Board of Trustees Retreat.*

2. The Board will conduct a review of its by-laws by the end of Spring 2022 and identify a permanent review cycle. It will commit to an annual retreat as part of its meeting schedule. **Completed**

*The Board of Trustees reviewed and approved updated by-laws and established a five-year review cycle in AY23. The Board committed to an annual retreat which began in June of 2023. The Board conducted another retreat in August of 2024.*

### **Standard 4 The Academic Program**

1. The academic deans will collaborate with academic departments to pursue curricular redesigns that differentiate the BA from the BS beyond the language requirement, beginning in AY22.

*Discussion with the deans began in AY23 and a plan was developed to guide conversations and possible actions at the department level in AY24. A comprehensive review occurred in AY24 with the following results:*

*Departments/programs who plan to...*

| <i>...revise current B.A./B.S. offerings</i>                         | <i>...eliminate their B.A.</i> | <i>...research/add a B.A. in one of their fields</i> | <i>...not add/revise/eliminate a B.A.</i>                            |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>BIOL/CHEM, MATH (SEC ED only), ENGL, DMI, HIST, POL SCI, IDIS</i> | <i>PSY</i>                     | <i>EGPHS, ECON, EDUC (EEC and ES only)</i>           | <i>EXSS, NURS, BSAD, CSC, ENGT, CJ, HMSV, COMM MEDIA, GAME, SOCI</i> |

2. Academic departments will undertake an evaluation of program course numbers beginning in AY23 to ensure numbers are consistently applied to indicate lower and upper-level courses.

*Discussion with the deans began in AY23 and a plan was developed to guide conversations and possible actions at the department level in AY24. A comprehensive review occurred in AY24 with the following results:*

| <i>Departments who submitted proposals in AY24 to revise course sequencing</i> | <i>Departments who need to submit proposals in AY25 to revise course sequencing</i> | <i>Departments where no changes are needed; course sequencing is established</i> |
|--|---|--|
| <i>HIST, CJ, POLSCI, COMM MEDIA, GAME</i>                                      | <i>ENGL, IDIS, SOC, ENGT, BSAD</i>  | <i>BIOL/CHEM, EGPHS, MATH, NURS, PSY, CSC, ENGT, HMSV, EDUC, ECON, DMI, EXSS</i> |

3. Academic deans will work with chairs to evaluate major requirements and open up space for elective options. A summary report of findings will be produced for every program by Fall 2024.

*Discussion with the deans began in AY23 and a plan was developed to guide conversations and possible actions at the department level in AY24. During AY24, departments reviewed their majors/programs of study and calculated the number of required courses and available free electives. The results are summarized below.*

| <i>Programs with ≤6 free electives credits</i> | <i>Programs with 7-12 free electives credits</i> | <i>Programs with 13-15 free electives credits</i> | <i>Programs with ≥16 free electives</i>             |
|--|--|---|---|
| <i>Early Education, Early Childhood,</i>       | <i>Game Design, Computer Science,</i>            | <i>B.A./B.S. Biology, English Studies</i>         | <i>Interdisciplinary(all), English Studies (Lit</i> |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><i>Elementary Education, Special Education: Moderate Disabilities PK-8, Special Education Severe Disabilities, Education Studies, Economics (Int'l Bus &amp; Econ conc), Engineering Technology (Applied Science &amp; Technology, Construction Management, Engineering Technology), Nursing, Mathematics (licensure), Exercise and Sports Science (Strength and Conditioning), Biology (licensure), Chemistry (licensure)</i></p> | <p><i>Computer Information Systems, Biology (Environmental Biology, Neuro Cognitive con), History Initial Licensure</i></p> | <p><i>(licensure), Exercise and Sport Science (Clinical Exercise Physiology, Fitness Management), Public Health Science (Public Health Practice), Comm (photo conc)</i></p> | <p><i>and Prof Writing), Economics (no conc), History (no conc), Political Science, Communications Media (all but photo), Criminal Justice, Human Services, Sociology, Business Administration (all), Psychological Science, Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Geographic Science and Technology, Environmental and Earth Science, B.S. Biology (and concentrations Biotech, Health Sci), Chemistry, Biochemistry</i></p> |
|---|---|---|---|

4. SGOCE will work with graduate chairs to explore the need for additional opportunities for student participation in research, grant-writing and conference presentations. A multi-disciplinary recommendation will be developed by May 2023 and presented to the Provost.

5. The SGOCE Dean will explore strategies to increase student awareness of and utilization of the PLA and CLEP exam options by Spring 2023. **Completed**

*In AY23, the PLA website was updated and improvements were made to the PLA process, including updating the application/instructions for use. Information provided to new students at orientation about these options was also updated and clarified.*

*Further updates have been made to the PLA website. There is now an assigned SGOCE staff member who will be working with all new undergraduate SGOCE students and will assist in promoting the PLA and CLEP options. SGOCE is also improving the information available to faculty about the PLA process and will have a faculty guide complete by the beginning of spring 2025.*

6. The university will formalize a transfer student taskforce that will regularly review and update services and processes for transfer students in AY23.

*Although not formalized, the transfer taskforce continued to work during AY23 based on the recommendations from AY22 and conducted a new survey of transfer students and their perceptions of services and resources. The taskforce reviewed the survey data, student demographic data and researched current best practices in transfer service. Recommendations were made for AY24 based on the findings.*

*In AY24, the transfer taskforce continued to meet and implemented some of the suggested changes from the initial survey administration. The taskforce plans to administer the survey biannually effective fall of 2024 in order to track student perceptions of transfer and to measure the efficacy of initiatives on perceived service gaps.*

### **Standard 5 Students**

1. The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management will develop a multi-year enrollment and marketing plan by Fall 2022 to achieve FSU's strategic enrollment goals.

*An undergraduate recruitment plan was presented to the Board of Trustees at the June 2023 retreat.*

2. The VP for Student Affairs will form a team in Fall 2023 to introduce a co-curricular model to the division.

*Student Affairs affirmed at their May 2023 retreat a plan to introduce the curricular model to the division during AY24. The Dean of Students and the VP for Student Affairs also met with Dr. Paul Brown, one of the founders of the model, to discuss introduction and education. However, due to the resignation in September 2023 of the Dean of Students who was scheduled to lead this work, along with the Director of Community Standards in August 2023, the timeline has been pushed to Fall 2024.*

3. In Fall 2025, Student Affairs will work with all departments to evaluate the effectiveness of the co-curricular model. This team will establish a set of assessment standards and the data collected will be used to make improvements to this work in Fall 2026.

4. In Fall 2022, Student Affairs and Institutional Research and Planning will create and administer a student survey to assess the change to Community Health Connections. In Spring 2023 results will be reviewed by senior leadership and action items will be identified for Fall 2023. **Completed**

*In Fall 2022, a survey regarding students' experiences with Community Health Connections (CHC) was administered. In Spring 2023, two sets of focus groups were completed, two with users and two with non-users. Presentations were made to student groups, the Student Affairs division, academic chairs, and the executive cabinet. In addition, results were shared with the chief operating officer of CHC. Results were quite favorable, with action items primarily centering on getting the word out more effectively. The Vice President for Student Affairs met with representatives of CHC during Summer 2023 to create a marketing plan. This projection was completed in AY24.*

5. In Fall 2022, SGOCE and Institutional Research and Planning will administer a survey to identify services used and desired by graduate students. In Spring 2023 a team of staff and administrators will develop recommendations, keeping in mind fees associated with varied student services.

*In AY23, SGOCE met with Noel Levitz and the Division of Student Affairs to discuss continuing the administration of the Adult Student Priorities (ASP) survey as a means to gather this information. The survey was then completed and results were compared to prior year surveys. A presentation of results is planned for the fall 2024 SGOCE chairs meeting and will be posted on the SGOCE website.*

6. In Fall 2022 the Senior Director of Athletics and Recreation will lead a committee to explore strategies that support student athletes' academic success. Committee recommendations will be submitted to the Vice President for Student Affairs in Spring 2023 for review and action. **Completed**

*A committee was formed and met three times during the fall 2022 semester to begin identifying recommendations. The committee was comprised of the Senior Director of Athletics & Recreation, the Director of TRIO Student Support Services, the Director of the Academic Coaching & Tutoring Center, and the Head Women's Basketball Coach. (The Head Football Coach was originally part of the committee but left the university.) The committee had conversations with library staff, the campus faculty athletic representative and other members of the academic affairs staff to ensure that multiple constituents were included in the process. By the end of the fall semester, the committee had identified its primary recommendations. The completed report was submitted to the VP of Student Affairs in Spring 2023 and also shared with and reviewed by the Provost.*

*In June 2023, the grant proposal "Put Me in, Coach: Athlete-Mentors, Growth Mindset, and a Community of Help-Seeking" was awarded a University Innovation Grant to continue work that had been piloted in Fall 2021. The pilot required first-year football team members and those with GPAs below 3.0 to attend weekly study halls. From fall 2021 to spring 2022, for 34 participants, not only did GPAs increase by an average of 8.53%, but increased receptivity to help-seeking was also evidenced by more questions being asked overall, by increased use of embedded tutors, and by increased use of the embedded research librarian. By increasing the number of study halls, opening them to all students, scaling up the embedded academic supports, and employing student athlete-mentors to actively build campus community around help-seeking, the plan was to extend these positive outcomes to a broader range of students through the AY24 grant.*

## **Standard 6 Teaching, Learning and Scholarship**

1. Academic deans will work with departments to develop strategies associated with Strategic Goal 4.1 of increasing diversity in faculty and staff, with support from Human Resources. Deans will report recommendations and implement the plans for recruitment in AY23.

*Effective AY23, the School of Health and Natural Sciences is collecting information regarding affinity groups in the disciplines that are hiring as well as collecting information regarding HBCUs that have doctoral programs in their faculty search areas.*

*At the start of AY23, the Leading for Change subcommittee on recruitment produced specific recommendations for recruitment and the hiring process through their 'Inclusive Hiring Initiative.' Deans will continue to work with HR and their departments to implement these recommendations.*

*In AY23, the Library developed an online guide: Massachusetts Public Academic Libraries: DEI Hiring Best Practices. This guide is intended to support academic library directors and library deans at Massachusetts public colleges and universities in creating a more diverse library workforce.*

2. Academic Affairs will explore continued strategies for supporting faculty as they build their teaching, scholarly, and artistic and creative activities portfolio with attention to time and resources. Recommendations will be developed for review by 2024.

*During AY24, Academic Affairs increased available funding in each Special Projects Grants categories, including:*

- *Grants for Research/Creative Activity (Category 1);*
- *Doubling the number of APRs available for course reassignments (Category 2);*
- *Adding a faculty stipend for mentorship of undergraduate student researchers (Category 3).*

*In addition, Academic Affairs re-introduced and updated the RFPs of four endowed funding sources to support faculty/librarian research and creative activity (combined total of \$95,000).*

3. During AY23, the academic deans will collaborate with each of the Schools to explore the possibility of a more standardized department onboarding program.

#### **Standard 7 Institutional Resources**

1. Human Resources and Payroll Services will develop a compensation model for part time contractors for FY22 to maintain pay equity and align with cost of living adjustments.
2. Human Resources, in collaboration with the Leading for Change subcommittee, will review its recruitment process (job description language, placement of announcements, outreach) to identify additional strategies to attract diverse candidates. This work will begin FY22.
3. Human Resources is exploring the establishment campus groups of staff and faculty in relation to shared characteristics, interests, or life experiences. This work will begin FY22.
4. In 2022, student affairs and finance staff will work with Massachusetts State College Building Authority on a long-term occupancy and space usage plan for implementation in FY2024.

*During AY23, members of Housing & Residential Services, Capital Planning & Maintenance, Administration & Finance, and the Vice President for Student Affairs met with members of the Massachusetts State College Building Authority (MSCBA) to prioritize the renovations and improvements that need to be done in our housing stock over the next few years. Staffing changes both on campus and at the MSCBA are allowing for a fresh perspective to complement the longitudinal memory of some staff members.*

*The University has begun discussions with both DCAMM and MSCBA regarding excess bed capacity. Specific conversations have included Herlihy Hall, including ongoing use planning and appropriate ownership assignment. Conversations were initiated in July of 2023, and included follow-up meetings and communications in November/December 2023. Both DCAMM and MSCBA, including legal representation, have been a party to meetings to discuss current "ownership", opportunities for alternative use (administrative offices, daycare program with a community partner), and which owner would provide best advantage given future potential*



*uses. Debt defeasance is one of the prime concerns before beds can be removed from MSCBA/housing assessments.*

*Additional investigations have occurred with MSCBA regarding repurposing of Mara 6 & 7 to meet the state need for affordable/workforce housing. While the buildings will be in current use for FY24 as student housing (offering an expansion of the extremely successful premium single program that was introduced in FY24), the extensive use of singles does not fully offset the cost of the annual assessments required to meet debt and other obligations.*

5. University leadership, led by the VP of Finance and Administration, will create a long-term sustainable business model that is aligned with strategic plan priorities, the academic portfolio, and anticipated enrollments, which will be approved by the Board of Trustees in FY2025.
6. The finance department will complete a thorough review and updating of all financial policies and procedures by January 2023. *Completed*

*This was completed during AY23. All financial policies, financial internal controls, and procedures were collected in a shared folder. 363 procedures were identified and collected. All FSU departments have their internal policies located on the shared drive I:\Internal Control\IC Documentation.*

7. The library will create in FY22 a scalable, sustainable, and technology-enhanced information literacy library instruction program that achieves stated student learning outcomes for the undergraduate and graduate student populations and aligns with the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework. An assessment plan for measuring the information literacy outcome and the effect of library resources and services will be developed for FY23. *Completed*

*An Information Literacy Instruction Plan was created in 2022 and can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wawuie0B7NBFizMdKFIATji6yDp9LUSc45iesYKGF/edit?usp=sharing>*

*In 2022, the Strategic Projects Librarian, in collaboration with the Instruction & Community Engagement Librarian and Coordinator of Library Operations led the Library staff in the collaborative development of a 5-year Assessment Plan to assess eleven key components of the library. The Assessment Plan is available on the Library's website @ <https://library.fitchburgstate.edu/about-the-library/strategic-plan/>*

*In addition, Librarians are playing a critical role in the development of an assessment process for the new General Education Curriculum with the Strategic Projects Librarian serving as the founding General Education Assessment Ambassador and the Head of Instruction and Information Literacy librarian as one of the 3 members of the General Education Assessment Program for the Learning Outcomes of Information Literacy, Reading, and Writing. Information about their General Education Assessment work is available at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/10f4a01gXhHFRjeJuEyMT\\_5zx6TM2ob9dY2tKCEdP6Qw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10f4a01gXhHFRjeJuEyMT_5zx6TM2ob9dY2tKCEdP6Qw/edit?usp=sharing)*

8. In order to further the goal of making OER more readily available to students, the Open and Affordable Education Committee, led by the library, will adopt and implement an OER Assessment Plan in 2021. This plan will set baselines for multiple key performance indicators and track these indicators over a five-year period. *Completed*

*Led by the Strategic Projects Librarian, a comprehensive assessment plan for OER entitled, “Developing a Programmatic Assessment Plan for the Use of Open and Affordable Course Materials at Fitchburg State University” was created and adopted in May 2021. OER usage data and student surveys results have been collected since 2019. For detailed results, go to: <https://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/oer/Infographics>*

*In 2022, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education used Fitchburg’s OER Assessment Plan as a template to create its own state-wide assessment plan and reporting requirements. This plan and its requirements now replace Fitchburg’s initial assessment plan. Fitchburg State began reporting OER data to the State in 2022.*

9. The Capital Planning and Maintenance management team will create an updated departmental Master Plan before July 2025 in conjunction with the Vice President of Administration and Finance. The Master Plan will take Gordian Sightlines Benchmarking and Sustainability reporting into consideration to coordinate projects that focus on older Net Asset Value buildings.

*A Facility Condition Assessment, initiated with DCAMM in FY23, was completed in FY24, which provides an updated survey of DCAMM owned buildings/properties at Fitchburg State University. This update was conducted as part of a system-wide assessment for the State University and Community College campuses to catalog conditions of existing facilities, identify ongoing deferred and/or upcoming maintenance needs, and provide cost information. The report provides the essential baseline information needed for completion of the departmental master plan by 2025.*

10. In 2021, the IT department will begin a series of general technology trainings for the campus to provide faculty and staff a baseline of knowledge on how computers and systems work securely; they will be viewable by on-campus and remote personnel. **Completed**

*Beginning in AY23, Information Technology created and disseminated instructional videos across the campus community. This activity will be on-going.*

11. Beginning in 2021, the IT department will continuously examine existing systems and applications for remote-work capabilities and take a “mobility-first” outlook when replacing or procuring systems to allow for easier transitions to work-from-home while controlling costs. **Completed**

*Effective AY22, as IT refreshes systems on campus that belong to individual users, they are, in nearly all cases, deploying laptop systems so that users have mobility. A Fax to Cloud solution which will allow users to send and receive faxes from any location in the world was rolled out beginning in Fall of 2023.*

## **Standard 8 Educational Effectiveness**

1. The General Education Program Area will implement an Assessment Plan by AY23.

*During AY24, the University completed its third year of a six-year assessment plan which leads up to Program Review in AY28.*

2. Led by the VP of Student Affairs, SA departments will implement a review process in FY23 similar to academic department program review. Nationally-benchmarked standards such as those published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards will provide the foundation.

*At the August 2022 Student Affairs Division retreat, the former President of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS), Dr. Gavin Henning, presented an introduction to CAS. CAS serves*



*as the standards by which each functional area (department) will self-evaluate beginning in 2023-24. This session was the first training related to the Student Affairs Program Review process. Beginning in the summer of 2023, all departments will undergo a CAS review based on a rotational schedule through 2026-27. The CAS Review was launched as planned during AY24 and will continue into the foreseeable future.*

3. OIRP will collaborate with the Office of Alumni and Development, department chairs, Registrar, and Career Services to implement strategies to increase response rates on both the Alumni and Graduating Students Surveys in order to provide more robust data to departments by AY23.

*In AY23, the administration of the First Destination Survey (formerly the Undergraduate Graduating Student Survey) was transitioned to the Career Services & Advising Center (CSAC) who leveraged Handshake, an industry best-practice job placement and career engagement platform, to improve survey response rates. As a result of various strategic actions such as pre-scheduled automated email outreach, texting and calling individual non-responders, adding a response incentive, coupled with dedicated staff time, response rates increased to 52% in AY23, up from 38% in AY22 and 29% in AY21.*

*Outreach for both the Graduate Graduating Student Survey and the 1,3, and 5-year alumni surveys was increased by the Director of Assessment beginning in AY22. Response rates for the Graduate Survey increased to 29% in AY23, up from 19% in AY22 and 18% in AY21. Alumni survey response rates have remained level from AY22 to AY23 with the average response rate among the three surveys at 8%. The Director of Assessment plans to leverage Qualtrics, implemented by OIRP in AY23, to further increase response rates.*

*Moving forward, collaboration with university partners such as the Office of Alumni and Development and the Commencement Committee will be needed to further improve response rates, particularly for the alumni surveys.*

### **Standard 9 Integrity, Transparency and Public Disclosure**

1. The President will convene a committee with representatives from all major divisions, including Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Finance and Administration, to develop a master calendar for policy review and updates by Spring 2023. *Executive Cabinet, representing all major areas of the University, was convened in Spring 2023 to discuss a plan to centralize access to policies, identify leads, establish review timelines and preview an electronic system to manage the process. A subgroup comprised of the Director of Communications, the CIO and the AVP of IRP met during AY24 to determine next steps in conjunction with the development of the online policies directory. (below)*

2. Marketing and Integrated Communications will create an online policies directory by 2024.

*The Director of Communications, the CIO and the AVP of IRP met during AY24 and developed a preliminary webpage that aggregates the policies and documents outlined in the Data First Form for Standard 9.*

3. The President will convene a committee by Fall 2022 with representatives from all major divisions, including Information Technology and Marketing & Integrated Communications, to explore ways to serve internal users' information needs. This might take the form of a credentialed "portal" or some other type of non-public interface. **Completed**

*In August 2023, the Technology Department introduced the new login portal [login.fitchburgstate.edu](http://login.fitchburgstate.edu), featuring Single-Sign-On (SSO) functionality. This portal simplifies access to a range of configured applications, allowing users to conveniently log in using their Fitchburg State email credentials. It serves as a centralized hub, streamlining access to essential services such as Blackboard, Gmail, College Scheduler, FalConnect, OneCard eAccounts, Rave FSU Alert, and more.*

4. The offices of Academic Affairs and Marketing & Integrated Communications will develop a process to ensure the university catalog and website are in alignment by Fall 2022. **Completed**

*Links to the catalog are updated on the website annually when the catalog is published in September. Website updates are made to avoid redundancy with catalog information displayed on the site, as a measure to avoid duplicate and outdated information. The majority of catalog links on the site are on the academic pages linking to the curriculum in the catalog. Technology runs a report annually to provide all of the pages where a catalog link resides, and those are accordingly updated. These updates typically are complete within two days.*

*During AY24, Academic Affairs began the process of reassigning the catalogs from the Office of Institutional Research & Planning to the Registrar. This will ensure that curricular information and updates will be consistent across platforms (i.e. the catalog, the university website, Banner SIS, Course Scheduler and the seats list.)*

5. By Fall 2022, Marketing & Integrated Communications will begin annual reviews with university offices that maintain branded social media accounts in order to ensure that the content is consistent with website and print publications. **Completed**

*The social media manager contacted all university-affiliated departments that operate social media channels to make sure the pages align with university branding and are kept updated. Only those that meet our specifications are listed on the university website's social media directory.*