

**LAKE SUPERIOR**  
**STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Strategic Plan**

**Lake Superior State University**

**Approved by the Board of Trustees July 25, 2008**

**Rodney L. Lowman**  
**President**

**LSSU Strategic Plan Executive Summary**

Lake Superior State University has identified four major needs for the next several years. These objectives all center on the need to expand the University to serve more students and to diversify the sources of income and support. The following major points form the core of the University's strategic plan for the next three to five years. These goals are summarized and elaborated in detail in the full Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Objective #1: Increase the Number of Students Served by the University**

The University is currently underenrolled for the size of its facilities and faculty and for its declining sources of financial support. It has suffered decreased enrollment over the last several years, a trend that appears to have stabilized with the 2007-8 academic year. Additionally, the large turnover in the number of enrolled students has required more and more students just to break even. The need is to grow the institution from its current size to about 5,000 – 6,000 in the next 4 – 5 years.

**Strategic Objective #2: Retain Already-Enrolled Students**

The University is losing too many of the students it successfully recruits to attend the University. Each percent increase in student retention translates into dollars earned in additional tuition and fees and dollars saved in new students we don't have to recruit, orient, etc. A substantial increase in students initially enrolled to those completing their degree objectives is needed.

**Strategic Objective #3: Increase Revenues from Non-Tuition Income**

State support for LSSU has steadily declined. The health of the Michigan economy is fragile and the likelihood of significantly enhanced funding is minimal for the next 4-5 years. Although tuition has risen sharply to compensate for these decreases, tuition increases cannot continue forever at current rates. The need is to substantially increase the amount of non-tuition funds raised by the Foundation. and to similarly increase the amount of grants and contracts raised by the University.

**Strategic Objective #4: Increase Net Revenues Through Better Cost and Investment Management**

The University needs to focus on managing net income, which needs to grow. Part of that equation is addressed by #3. The rest concerns ways to decrease costs. We must utilize scarce resources efficiently. Wherever possible without sacrificing quality, we must lower expenditures. The University must also reduce its outstanding debt.

## **Strategic Plan, Lake Superior State University**

This document outlines an initial strategy for helping the University get from where it now is (high carry over deficit, high debt ratios for the size of the institution (declining to “break even” enrollments), modest to low endowment, market invisibility, and relatively low fund raising) to a different financial state with greater assurance of longer-term survivability and ultimately progress.

*This document identifies four major issues needing to be addressed:*

### **Strategic Objective #1: Increase the Number of Students Served by the University**

#### **PROBLEM:**

The University is currently underenrolled for the size of its facilities and faculty and for its declining sources of financial support. It has suffered decreased enrollment over the last several years. This decline appears to have stabilized with the 2007-8 academic year. Additionally, the large turnover in the number of enrolled students has required more and more students just to break even.

#### **NEED:**

To grow the institution from its current size to about 5,000 in the next 3 years; to increase it to around 6,000 in the 2 years after that.

#### **PLAN:**

##### **A. Market Institution More Effectively**

A1. Revise mission/vision/values statement so that there is clarity on purpose and goals of institution.

A2. Selectively increase marketing expenditures relying on improved web as primary marketing recruiting tool until more marketing monies can be built into the budget.

A3. Revise web site according to Staamats recommendations.

A4. Obtain visibility for university with key decision makers.

A5. Identify marketing strategy targets; align expenditures with strategy.

A6. Improve internal marketing (morale, customer service, etc.).

A7. Evaluate effectiveness of current funding and staffing of marketing; revise as needed to be able to market both academic and non-academic programs.

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**B. Improve Quality of Academic Programs**

B1. Assess quality of current programs using traditional indicators of

B1a. Average GPA of students entering major

B1b. Average ACT/SAT of students entering major

B1c. Number of students starting major

B1d. Student Faculty Ratios using standard FTE definitions of students and faculty

B2. Data on each major's graduates for last five years

B2a. Number of students completing major

B2b. The number of graduates seeking jobs v. graduate/professional school

B2c. Average starting salaries of graduates

B2d. Time to first job or graduate school enrollment

B3. Establish outcome criteria for each program

B3a Meet HLC expectations on measuring outcomes and student learning effectiveness.

B3b. Establish criteria for becoming a "learning organization" by acting on data collected to improve the quality of the academic programs.

**C. Expand Offerings in Regional Centers and other Off-Site Locations**

C1. Expand offerings in two existing regional centers.

C2. Add new Regional Center locations with strong, competitive majors.

C3. Add new offerings in partnership with selected charter school locations.

**D. Expand On-Line Offerings**

D1. Add on line programs, seeking HLC approval for programs as necessary.

D2. Expand on-line course offerings.

**E. Expand Number of Undergraduate & Graduate Offerings**

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E1. Selectively expand programs in areas of strength.

F. Increase Number of International Students both from Canada and abroad

G. Have at Least Two Successful (A Majority of Wins Over Losses or Ties) D-2 or D-1 Athletic Teams

G1. Improve the performance of our D1 and D2 athletic teams.

G2. Attract and retain more qualified student athletes.

**Strategic Objective #2: Retain Already-Enrolled Students**

**PROBLEM:**

The University is losing too many of the students it successfully recruits to attend the University.

Data – Our current student turnover rates for the last several years have been as follows (charting so called “pure” freshmen, i.e., full time, degree-seeking students).

**Full/Time Degree Seeking Students, Fall to Fall**

	<b>F01- F02</b>	<b>F02- F03</b>	<b>F03 - F04</b>	<b>F04 - F05</b>	<b>F05-F06</b>	<b>F06 -F07</b>
<b>Fr – Soph</b>	65%	66%	60%	62%	58%	59%
<b>Soph – Jr</b>	77%	77%	74%	76%	75%	75%
<b>Jr – Sr</b>	85%	82%	78%	84%	85%	83%

**NEED:**

To retain more of the students we have. Each percent increase in student retention translates into dollars earned in additional tuition and fees and dollars saved in new students we don't have to recruit, orient, etc.

**PLAN:**

A. Establish Goals for Student Retention in Each Category of Student.

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A1. Base goals on institution's needs in the context of industry standards for student retention.

### B. Analyze the Reasons for Student Retention and Non-Retention

B1. Using data available and newly obtained data identify and classify students according to major reasons for staying and for leaving.

B2. Identify the profiles of successfully retained students versus those who left the university. Include what is known from student characteristics (age, high school, entering GPA, ACT scores, participation in clubs, etc.).

B3. Determine the subtypes of each (e.g., underqualified "at risk" students, academic high end students, those raised in locations of a particular size, etc.).

B4. Compare with what is known in the professional literature on student retention.

### D. Conduct Exit Interviews and Surveys

D1. Establish in-person exit interview protocols and by-mail exit interview surveys for students who have already left the campus.

D2. Summarize and report data at least quarterly.

### E. Devise Student Retention Strategies Based on A – C.

E1. Design retention strategies for students with

- E1a. academic issues
- E1b. social issues
- E1c. adjustment problems
- E1d. other (or some combination)

E2. As appropriate, revise student admissions criteria to assure that students accepted are not those at high risk of academic or other failure.

E3. Measure successes in each area and the overall impact on student retention rates.

E4. Modify strategy based on E3.

### F. Having Exemplary Customer Service

F1. Measure at least annually perceptions of Customer Service.

F2. Work with HR to design appropriate Customer Service training programs.

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### **G. Maintain Safe and Secure Facilities and Institutions**

- G1. Conduct safety audits to minimize risks to our students and staff.
- G2. Invest in technology to assure that risk prevention is a primary focus.
- G3. Review safety statistics and take appropriate action.
- G4. Review and update all safety and disaster preparedness plans.

### **Strategic Objective #3: Increase Revenues from Non-Tuition Income**

#### **PROBLEM:**

State support for LSSU has steadily declined. The health of the Michigan economy is fragile and the likelihood of significantly enhanced funding is minimal for the next 4-5 years. Although tuition has risen sharply to compensate for these decreases, tuition increases cannot continue forever at current rates. The need is to substantially increase the amount of non-tuition funds raised by the Foundation, and to similarly increase the amount of grants and contracts raised by the University.

#### **NEED:**

Increase the amount of non-tuition funds raised by the Foundation.

Increase the amount of grants and contracts raised by the University.

#### **PLAN:**

- A. Design and successfully implement a 3-5 Year “LSSU - Building Excellence” fund raising campaign directed to the following initial goals (approximate goals):
  - Capital Campaign for SBEL Building (approximately \$5.5million)
  - Capital Campaign to retire Arts Center debt and endow performance fund and academic programs in the arts (approximately \$5 million)
  - Capital Campaign to build out the Aquatic Research Laboratory (ARL) (Approximately \$5 million)
  - Building Excellence in Athletics Campaign to include both capital expenditures and funds for student recruitment and scholarships in athletics and in specific sports (Approximately \$7 million)
  - Academic Excellence Fund to endow chairs and scholarships in our areas of academic excellence (approximately \$5 million)

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- A1. Establish campaign chairs for each of the major fund raising initiatives.
- A2. Obtain high levels of voluntary giving from current faculty and staff
- A3. Enlist currently enrolled students in fund raising efforts
- A4. Instill in current students the expectation of giving back after graduation
- A5. Re-organize Alums to include
  - A5a. Local alum chapters headed by a geographic alum chair
  - A5b. Chapters organized by year of graduation and by program
- A6. Increase the revenues coming from alumni dues to offset costs of alumni office
- A7. Establish a “Face Book” type electronic alumni data base to which alums have access as a benefit of alumni dues membership
- A8. Develop comprehensive Annual Fund campaigns.
- B. Increase Revenues from Auxiliary Enterprises.
  - B1. Re-position Barnes & Noble Bookstore to increase retail sales and connection with the community.
  - B2. Increase Arts Center offerings and assure that the events are profitable to the University.
- C. Substantially increase summer offerings for camps, tuition-generating revenue that brings in new income stream
- D. Increase revenue streams from the Robotics, prototype development, chemical analyses, ARL and planetarium operations.
- E. Develop an Office of Sponsored Research to sharply increase grants and contracts coming in to the University
- F. Manage cash flow and bill payment so as to maximize the revenues coming to the University and minimize those going out

### **Strategic Objective #4: Increase Net Revenues Through Better Cost and Investment Management**



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### **PROBLEM:**

The University needs to focus on net income, which needs to grow. Part of that equation is addressed by Strategic Objective #3. The rest concerns ways to decrease costs and to maximize investments.

### **NEED:**

Utilize scarce resources efficiently. Wherever possible without sacrificing quality, lower expenditures.

### **PLAN:**

- A. Working with Vice President for Finance increase cost/management analysis of current operations.
- B. Determine ways to do the same or better job for less money.
- C. Determine areas in which the University should invest short-term for long-term savings.
- D. Identify areas at high risk for cost escalation (e.g., utilities and health benefits) and develop a plan to minimize the cost increases in these areas.
- E. Consider structure of the University (both academic and non-academic) as to its efficiency and evaluate alternative ways of managing.
- F. Restructure financial reporting to allow better cost management.
- G. Improve financial and management analysis of the organization.
- H. Enlist all faculty and staff in cost savings measures to do what we are doing more efficiently.
- I. Partner with the community to leverage resources.
- J. Identify ways to save money on energy, insurance, legal expenditures.
- K. Refinance existing bonds to decrease debt servicing expenses when a long-term savings can be realized.

**Appendix A.**

**Implementation Recommendations from All Hands Meeting, February, 2008**

**Strategic Objective #1: Increase the Number of Students Served by the University**

Take current students to the high schools (junior high schools) and have them present to the students (very interactive).

Ensure the admissions staff have good knowledge of the academic programs across campus.

Encourage faculty/staff to channel information (which promotes programs/students) to Tom Pink.

Sponsor local sports teams (hockey, softball, chess clubs, etc.)

Develop and maintain articulation agreements with high school career centers and community colleges.

Look at enhancing transportation options for off-campus students (buses, EUPTA, etc.)

Look at joining consortiums in foreign countries that prepare and then recruit transfer students to LSSU (2+2, 3+1). Ensure good English skills.

Look for ways to develop our international programs and make use of our international setting.

Look for ways to develop new service orientated programs (hospitality).

Look for innovative ways to utilize our natural/rural setting and modify the academic calendar to accommodate hunting. Advertise in outdoor/hunting magazines.

Tap into high school teachers and counselors to enhance the image of LSSU. Need to change the way LSSU is viewed.

Offer on-line course focused at the Canadian market (avoid the bridge). Develop pseudo on-line courses where students have study guides and reading materials. Develop a centralized on-line office and support system for current resources. 24/7 call center for student support. Contact successful on-line providers and learn from their mistakes/successes. Could we offer on-line courses at other universities/community colleges? Bring high-profile speakers to campus (1 per year).

Recognize Canadian holidays.

**Strategic Objective #2: Retain Already-Enrolled Students**

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### How to Retain Enrolled Students

- Provide some financial assistance or scholarships to sophomores. All the funds go to freshmen and little is available to sophomores.
- Students really need a financial advisor more than an academic advisor.
- Develop more information of local resources for:
  - Financial help
  - Housing
  - Support groups (faith based, pregnant, lonely, etc.)
  - Michigan Works, FIA, etc.
- Revisit the calendar (
- Offer more activities for dorm students, after hours, commuters, etc.
- Faculty keep better tab on students and if missing classes inform Retention Office.

### Why Students Leave

- Academic program not available.
- Home sick
- Personal and social issues
- Under prepared
- Student takes too many credits (try to advise to take lighter load)
- False expectations of taking a full load and working full time.

### How can academic areas increase retention?

- We need good advising, what we often have is help in scheduling, not advising
- Advisors need to do more than help with course scheduling, they must advise the student in all aspects of university survival
- Revisit how students are assigned to advisors – recognize and reward this
- Try to spread out advising load
- Advisors need to see students much earlier, certainly within the first month and potentially within the first week or too
- Teaching excellence is primary

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How can LSSU be more attractive?

- 40% of English courses taught by adjuncts (worst case). We need to put more regular professors in front of the class.
- Need to have some of our best professors teach some introductory classes, not just upper level major classes
- Need a real first year program
- Competitive analysis – what are others doing
- Seminar classes for freshmen through senior, not just for juniors and seniors
- Make border crossing easier

Can we identify who is leaving?

- Low GPA
- Financial need
- Homesickness
- Social Issues
- Uncommitted to the program of study
- Uninvolved
- First generation students

How can faculty keep students from leaving?

- Provide the “personal” touch
- Have a positive attitude
- Show you care

### **Strategic Objective #3: Increase Revenues from Non-Tuition Income**

- **ASK** – They won’t give if you don’t ask
- **Flow Chart** – Create a checklist for employees regarding how to handle gifts, particularly scholarship or memorial gifts. Who to contact, etc.
- **Send top guns out** – President and VPs need to be fundraising
- **Networks:** Share, Collaborate, Coordinate
- Ask non-giving alumni to commit \$10 / month – can give by CC, EFT
- **Model and Challenge:** Learn % employee support by campus area. Hold up supportive areas as example to others
- Wear LSSU attire and be prepared to tell story!
- Market the Michigan Tax Credit and federal tax deduction, showing actual cost of gift to be much lower than face value
- Tell Alumni or Foundation office when you travel – consider hosting a reception or lunch with area alumni. Advancement office will help fund
- Create a Corporate Membership Program that area business will want to belong to

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- Emphasize what they get for their membership: projects, interns, graduates
- Market Matching Gift Programs – double your money
- Seek equipment donations and endorsements, not just cash
- Don't rely only on the web: Get word out in print!

### **Create Opportunities To Connect with Alumni**

- Host alumni socials
- Foundation should inform Departments of gifts so they can thank donors
- Recognize Donors
- Summer alumni reunions – get faculty involved.
- Alumni/Found should have regular meeting with departments to inform what we are doing (similar to what Admissions did recently)
- Coordinate fund raising efforts campus wide
- Departments should identify key alumni and parents in their area
- Have a donation drop off at the Bookstore
  
- Look into possibility of having an affinity Credit Card where rewards, instead of accruing to the cardholder, would go to a fund to help students with tuition

### 1. Infrastructure needed?

### **Some infrastructure exists—Removal of impediments and increased support needed!**

#### Impediments:

- **Culture of grant writing needs to be the norm across campus**
  - Promote grant writing across campus – faculty and staff (ex: some departments to not support faculty pursuing grants)
  - Build university awareness of the opportunity to supplement our limited resources (often indirect costs are minimal, but faculty are obtaining funds to support equipment maintenance and acquisition as well as student research opportunities)
  - Give PIs authority to accomplish their research in a timely manner (and reduce oversight by purchasing)
    - Purchases currently are not allowed during a defined period (May-June) which negatively affects summer activity (research and summer camps)
    - Purchases off grants are questioned --projects were delayed 2 months to save \$100 on an equipment purchase through Purchasing—PIs acquired the funds and should be responsible for how they are spent
  - Change process to encourage individuals to pursue grant opportunities (the current form should be restructured)
  - Need understanding of difference between contracts and grants
- **Revisit indirect cost –**
  - clarify policy and note flexibility in the rate
  - communicate that the 52% is not a hard-line value; some areas did not know this
  - communicate where these funds go—what is the incentive for faculty to pursue external funds?

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- **Grants officer needed to streamline process**
  - Assist faculty in obtaining information on available grants
  - help with writing – editing, general information, institutional research figures
  - assist with budget preparation
  - assist staff in obtaining grants for program support (e.g., food service, learning center)
  - could help promote research activities
  
- **Budget assistance needed –**
  - Banner reporting is difficult for PIs to obtain
  - Need to obtain a macro for Banner so PIs can obtain reporting on their own

2. How can faculty and staff best assist with getting G&C and what incentives are needed?

- Start-up funds for incoming faculty that are expected to complete research
- **Summer grants** for preliminary research and/or grant writing
- **Release time** for grant writing
- **Indirect cost policy clarified** – return \$\$ to department and faculty
- Support dissemination of research findings – conference presentations, publications
- **Targeted professional development fund** that rewards faculty actually doing professional development

3. What areas do we have the most opportunities to increase G&C?

4. How can we partner with local and regional communities to increase G&C? Other universities?

- Difficult to partner with others if internal support isn't available

5. How can info best be relayed to the University about potential opportunities?

- Through grants office and website

Are there large G&C that we are well positioned for?

**Appendix B. LSSU Mission/Values & Vision Statements**

*LSSU Mission/Vision Statement*

Our principal mission at Lake Superior State University is to help students develop their full potential. We do this by providing high-quality, academically rigorous programs in an engaged, personal and supportive environment. This combination nurtures potential and sets students on paths to rewarding careers and productive, satisfying lives. We also serve the regional, national and global communities by contributing to the growth, dissemination and application of knowledge.

*LSSU Values Statement*

Our values at LSSU are to

- be honest, open, forthright, and courteous
- respect and value each person as an individual
- accept responsibility for our own conduct
- be diligent in carrying out our responsibilities
- welcome diverse perspectives and remain open to change and innovation
- manage resources and facilities responsibly and with environmental sensitivity
- be vigilant about potential threats to health or safety
- work cooperatively in the interest of achieving our common mission.