

Clarion University
Financial Sustainability Advisory Taskforce
Executive Summary of Outcomes
June 2020

The Charge

In March 2020, Dr. Dale commissioned the Financial Sustainability Advisory Taskforce in response to the system's mandate for the institution to create a five-year financial sustainability plan. The group, made up of a cross-section of faculty, staff and students from around the university and involving 64 people in total, was charged with developing a plan which would stabilize Clarion's financial position while keeping the student experience (academic, co-curricular and safety) at the forefront of this work. The FSAT reviewed financial data, staffing levels, academic program enrollment, as well as the STEP-UP enrollment plan and our Truth North Initiative recommendations as guiding documents that laid the foundation for the work.

Workgroups

The work started with five topic-specific workgroups drafting recommendations in April and May of 2020. At the end of May, members of the FSAT reviewed and modified the recommendations and forwarded them to the President's Executive Council for final consideration. The charge of working groups were as follows:

New Revenue Streams – This group will develop new ways to bring in revenue and discuss ways to increase capacity of existing services so we can generate additional dollars. The scope of this work should be narrowed to non-academic enterprises.

Academic Programs- This group will develop ways to align costs with revenue by: recommending right-sizing existing programs; growing current offerings to meet the changing workforce demands; or proposing new programs and/or program modalities that could be offered in the future.

Enrollment Optimization – This group will find ways to optimize enrollment through creative tuition options, partnerships with outside organizations, institutional aid, and retention initiatives that align with existing plans.

Student-to-Employee Ratio – This group will provide an analysis of the current staffing ratios and share this data in comparison to the system-mandated student-to-employee ratios.

General Savings – This group will recommend ways the university, as a whole, could change our operations to become more fiscally responsible (outsourcing opportunities, position restructures, paperless campus, more environmentally green buildings, etc.).

The following is a summary of recommendations that will be implemented over the course of the next two to three years.

Academic Programs

1. Review, revise and right-size academic programs to align costs with revenue.
2. Leverage Clarion's strength in online delivery and develop new programs and partnerships.
3. Revise existing programs and develop new programs to meet changing workforce demands.

Revenue Generation

4. Strengthen our pipelines for recruitment in high schools through Bridge Builders and high school partnerships, including expansion of dual enrollment opportunities.
5. Expand the Northwest Alliance program to include greater collaboration with existing academic programs; move the operation to an on-campus location.
6. Sell underutilized real estate.
7. Expand tournaments and camp programs.
8. Implement option for premium/upgraded student services.

General Savings

9. Reduce cell phone stipends for employees.
10. Reduce overload expenses by raising caps on classes and reducing sections.
11. Explore opportunities to reduce the number of positions and salary dollars through outsourcing.
12. Decrease the number of administrators overseeing the academic programs.
13. Reduce personnel costs through attrition, furloughs, salary reductions and elimination of positions.
14. Limit new hires to align with PASSHE mandates.
15. Provide preferential hiring to students with financial need who qualify for federal or state work study funds, and remove departmental budgets for institutional work study.
16. Reduce overtime.
17. Reorganize university areas to flatten the hierarchy of management positions with an eye toward restructuring and combining divisions.
18. Review sabbatical procedures for potential cost savings.
19. Moving toward becoming a paperless campus.

Enrollment Optimization

20. Review academic advising and success coaching as a way to positively impact retention.
21. Adopt an aid strategy to leverage institutional dollars to optimize enrollment and net tuition revenue.
22. Investigate opportunities to grow enrollment through expansion of female athletic programs.

Next Steps

These recommendations will be researched and implemented where appropriate over the course of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years. A great deal of data collection, analysis and collaborations with bargaining units and other employees needs to take place before many of these actions can be taken. In collaboration with the FSAT, various teams will be established to implement changes, and the university community will continue to be engaged in the process. Implementation for the majority of the recommendations will take place in the second (2021-22) and third (2022-23) years.