Academic Retreat: Summary

On May 22, 2013, over 100 faculty and staff from across the academic schools, colleges, and departments joined with staff from academic support areas as well as SUNY System and partner community colleges to envision who our future students might be, to imagine what it will mean to prepare the students of the future, and to consider what we might do to position ourselves to reach our goals for them.

The President's charge to the participants noted that with the changes in the higher education landscape, we have an increasingly diverse student body, in terms of ethnic origin and national heritage, attitudes and expectations, age, preparation for college and work, and life experience. At the same time, our economy and the jobs of the future do not look like the economy and jobs of the past, and as a result, students (and their parents') aspirations are shifting, and employers are looking for different talents and skills than in the past. To prepare our students well for the future will entail taking into account these changes, addressing such questions as:

- How we can design effective strategies and curricula that will meet our students' immediate goals and our goal of forming educated citizens of the world?
- Where we need to concentrate our efforts?
- Where do we already have areas of excellence on which we can build?

These questions were to be considered from the perspective of the "first time full time" freshman, the student who transfers to us from one of our partner institutions; the student who wants to access our courses and programs online, and students who might be drawn from their undergraduate education with us into graduate studies.

Addressing the charge, participants began to consider a variety of vantage points: University at Albany enrollment—where students come from, what they come for, and why they leave; undergraduate admissions from the local and national and international perspectives; transfer partners—what students who have started college elsewhere seek in transferring to UAlbany; employment—what students do upon graduation, and what employers are looking for. Following these presentations were small group discussions among participants, focused on the questions above and subsequently shared in a plenary session. While there were many more ideas and details in the "table" discussions than can be presented here, the following provides a high-level summary of the major themes emerging from the retreat.

Major themes and areas of broad agreement

1. The importance of <u>expanding and developing "high needs" areas</u> that correspond to job opportunities of the 21st century;

2. <u>Areas of strength</u> we can capitalize on and should invest in to serve our students' needs and aspirations and prepare them for professional success and effective citizenship, while also recognizing that investment is also needed to insure that the institution as a whole is both comprehensive and comprehensively excellent;

3. The need for considering not only the 'traditional' disciplinary emphasis on what students know but also <u>what the students can do</u> with what they've learned;

4. The importance and value of sustaining excellence in the areas that help provide our students with <u>knowledge and skills for effective lives and careers</u> (e.g. critical thinking, problem solving, flexibility, writing, oral communication, understanding of diversity, global perspectives, etc.); and

5. To achieve the above outcomes, the need to develop a wide-ranging set of <u>partnerships and collaborations</u> to meet the needs of our future students.

Further information on areas for expansion and development, and on partnerships, follows. Note that many points were also made about strategy, method, and investment needs inside and outside of academic units; full discussion notes available at https://www.dropbox.com/s/9gkn7fb56gialhi/Academic%20Retreat%20Discussion%20Notes%20FINAL.docx.

<u>High Needs Areas for Expansion and/or Development</u>

High needs areas for expansion (chosen because they align with the aspirations of our students, the needs of employers, and are already areas of strength or incipient strength at the University at Albany) included, in alpha order:

- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Computer and Information Sciences, Computer engineering
- Health Sciences: bio-sciences, behavioral health, health administration
    o Formats might include certificates, defined 'tracks,' interdisciplinary programs
- Forensics (necessarily interdisciplinary: SOB, CCI, Rock, CJ, others)
- Social Welfare
- STEM programs (biology, chemistry, human biology…)

Areas for New Development:
- Expanded opportunities for <u>engaged learning</u>--internships, coops, practicums, service learning courses and capstones--so students can explore professions and develop discipline specific competencies experientially.

- <u>New degrees, programs, and "paths" to professions</u> not currently in our repertoire. These include paths to new kinds of jobs as well as paths for different kinds of students. (Note that many of these are partnerships between existing program areas). Examples include:
    o Health professions (e.g., behavioral health; bio-engineering; community health policy; global health; nutrition
    o IT and Digital (digital technology, graphic arts, gaming, animation; entertainment design and technology; IT)
    o Security & Forensics (cyber-security, homeland security (CCI, Rock, SOB collaborations); forensics)
    o Engineering programs with specific focus (environmental, bio, etc)
    o Sustainability, environmental sciences for green jobs

- <u>Strategic online offerings</u> that build on our unique strengths (no duplication with offerings from other institutions, focus on excellence in online programs, focus on 'public good', and what we do particularly well).

- <u>Experimental flexibility</u> for various populations of students in how we deliver our programs (blended, online, weekend, intensive, evening, accelerated, etc).

- <u>More 5 year programs</u> (BA/MA; BA/MS; BA/MA; BS/MS) where students know they will complete a Masters.

Skills, competencies, and experiences needed by all undergraduates:

- Writing
- Analytical skills
- Technical and technological skills

- Global awareness (language, culture)
- Entrepreneurship (esp. with the sciences)
- Career planning, exploration, and development
- Research experience; engaged/experiential learning

Partnerships and Collaborations

Development of Partnerships within the University

- Development of new concentrations within majors that require collaboration between desirable disciplines, and aim at core competencies. Examples include:
  - Criminal Justice and Political Science
  - Basic sciences and health sciences
  - Cyber-security—collaborations between Rockefeller, CCI, SOB
  - Behavioral health—collaborations between SSW, SPH, Rock, CRJ, SOE, CAS
  - Communication, Media, Journalism (writing, communication, technical and literacy competencies)

- Partnerships that support and increase the connection between Undergraduate and Graduate programs, encouraging students to use their UG majors, minors and concentrations for advanced degrees. Examples include:
  - Global Studies and Public Health
  - English and the MS in Secondary Education
  - 3 + 2 programs in many fields (CAS and Professional Schools)

- Partnerships between academic departments and units that offer career-related services to support students' career awareness, development and formal career exploration and experiences:
  - Create a continuum of career exploration and experiential learning within academic programs
  - Expand and formalize career exploration opportunities such as co-ops, community service and internships as well as stronger linkages between majors and careers
  - Build relationships with alumni (connect current students with alumni through programs that teach about specific professions)
  - Build relationships with Capital Region businesses for co-op and employment opportunities

Development of Partnerships with other Institutions of Higher Education

- Partnerships with Community Colleges (CC's) in the area to make a more seamless transition for transfer students, and to reach out to populations of students who would readily take degrees from UAlbany if the conditions were right. Examples include:
  - Recruit Honors students in the CC honors programs and include them in our Honors program
  - Create 2+2+1 or 3+2 degree arrangements.
  - Create the option of teaching UAlbany courses on the CC campuses so students can get a UA degree while remaining close to home.

- Partnerships with other institutions, (including CC's, medical schools (i.e. Downstate), and out-of-state schools) who offer highly marketable majors or concentrations, so that students can easily see UAlbany paths to their chosen profession. Examples include:
  - Physical therapy
  - Occupational therapy
  - Nursing
  - Physicians Assistants