Academic Strategic Plan 2024: Charting Our Academic Journey

In 2024, High Point University will celebrate its centennial. In anticipation of this milestone, President Qubein has asked us to complete a new strategic plan for academics. Our plan will be the cornerstone of a broader plan for the entire University and will help lead High Point University into our second century.

This is an important opportunity for all of us. Together, we must imagine a future for our educational programs that does justice to our proud history as a liberal arts college and to the many strengths of our professional programs. We must articulate how we can complement High Point’s expansion in programs, enrollment, and facilities with a quantum leap in academic excellence.

Key Challenges
These are exciting but challenging times for higher education. While more individuals are going to college, both students and their families have become more informed and discerning. They expect universities to explain exactly how a college degree will benefit its graduates, particularly in terms of future career preparation.

What many students and parents do not realize, however, is that the days of preparing graduates for a single job or professional pursuit are over.

The reality is that today’s graduates can expect to hold 10 to 14 different jobs by the time they are 38. Many will work in jobs that don’t even exist today. Regardless of their majors, most will not stick to a single career track. Even those who do will likely take on many different roles within their chosen profession.

The Value of Liberal Education
High Point University believes that liberal education—combining the breadth of the liberal arts and sciences with the depth of disciplinary specialization—provides the best preparation for graduates. A liberal education also equips graduates to be life-long learners. But what exactly is liberal education?

Liberal education is defined by the AAC&U as an education “that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and that cultivates social responsibility and a strong sense of ethics and values.”
In 2015 AAC&U conducted a survey of more than 500 employers. The results provide ample evidence that the fruits of liberal learning are highly prized in the workplace:

- More than ever, employers are seeking liberally-educated graduates who are proficient in written and oral communication...teamwork...ethical decision-making...critical thinking...and who have the ability to solve complex problems.

- Nearly all employers agreed that these skills are even MORE important than his or her undergraduate major.

- In fact, nearly 80% of employers agree that “every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences.”

Here at High Point, our understanding of the importance of a liberal education has taken many forms. It has helped us strengthen our gen ed curriculum by adopting AAC&U’s LEAP framework. It also served as a guiding principle for our last academic strategic plan. And it is vital to our ongoing efforts to shelter a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Many of you have shared with me the ways in which you value and build on these values in your own courses.

**Call for Faculty Input**

I am always grateful for your input, and today I must ask for it again as we begin to shape our new strategic plan:

I ask you to consider the habits of mind that we want to develop in our graduates.

I want to know what you see as the key strengths—and weaknesses—of our academic programs.

How can we strengthen and more fully integrate our liberal arts core and disciplinary specializations?

How should our university vision and mission reflect our commitment to increased academic excellence?

I look forward to your thoughts on these big-picture questions, both in writing and at this month’s Town Hall sessions.
Over the next year, APIRC will continue to solicit your input, together with that of institutional leaders, to develop our academic strategic plan.

We have the opportunity of a lifetime to influence the next 100 years of where our university is headed. I look forward to charting this journey with you.