

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA 2013–2017 STRATEGIC PLAN



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA



Meeting these goals will be a significant challenge because the future of higher education is at a crossroads.

With the conclusion of the 2007-2012 strategic plan, *Building an Extraordinary University*, we can look back with pride upon our achievements over the last five years. We've grown our campus with new buildings and more students as enrollment exceeds 10,000 students. We've strengthened our undergraduate and graduate degree programs to meet the needs of an ever-changing global workforce. We've established ourselves as a competitive research institution capable of bridging public education expertise with private sector ingenuity. And with the completion of our NCAA Division I transition, our student-athletes are positioned to compete on the nation's greatest athletics stage for years to come.

We take great satisfaction in the contributions that generations of loyal USD friends have made during our first 150 years. But for the University of South Dakota to truly position itself as the best small, public flagship university in the nation built upon a liberal arts foundation — it's time to move onward. This strategic plan to guide USD through 2017 embraces what we do best but, more importantly, underscores what we must do better in order to grow this great university.

It begins with reaffirming our identity as a liberal arts university and defining how we will reach our goals in the areas of student experience; research, scholarship and creative work; diversity and inclusiveness; community and university relations; and liberal arts and learning. To be successful, we must develop and maintain a vibrant campus community in Vermillion that will characterize a USD education.

USD also must become an inclusive campus. By increasing diversity among students, faculty and staff, we will broaden the intellectual and social life of the university. We must continue to grow our contributions to economic development in South Dakota with interdisciplinary research and scholarly activity. Identifying areas of research in emerging fields and aligning ourselves with research connected with national trends is a priority.

As our new strategic plan demonstrates, our commitment is greater than ever. Meeting these goals will be a significant challenge because the future of higher education is at a crossroads. Students have unlimited options to pursue their academic and career goals. Students worldwide have access to a college education without having to set foot on a college campus. Still, we know the USD experience has much to offer. Five years from now, we will be able to celebrate our continued growth knowing that our fundamental values remain the same—educating our students, enriching their lives and preparing them for the future.

I want to thank the 29 members of the strategic planning committee for shaping this comprehensive plan for the University of South Dakota. Achieving these ambitious goals will require the full and enthusiastic support of all who work and care for the university.

Sincerely,

James W. Abbott, President



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The following plan is the outcome of a far-reaching discussion about USD’s future. Information-gathering sessions were held in fall 2011 with a broad range of constituencies on campus and in the surrounding community. The results were assembled and analyzed in 2012 by a 29-member strategic planning committee with input from others. These results and analysis formed the basis for the plan that will guide the University of South Dakota through 2017.

OUR VISION

To be the best

small, public **flagship university** in the nation built
upon a **liberal arts foundation.**

USD IN 2017

The University of South Dakota (USD) is the state's flagship institution of higher education. USD serves as the region's intellectual heart, combining student-centered teaching with innovative research and a deep tradition of service. The faculty of USD are recognized experts in their fields who cultivate an inclusive spirit of academic inquiry and achievement. USD students prepare for the future's challenges through a rigorous curriculum firmly grounded in the liberal arts, combined with diverse experiences in laboratories and clinical settings, courtrooms and classrooms, studios and athletic facilities. The high quality of a USD education makes it an excellent value. The university's graduates are thoughtful, well-informed and adaptable. USD alumni are leaders and responsible citizens, dedicated to understanding and meeting the economic, cultural, social, educational and health needs of their communities and our world. The commitment to critical thinking, complex reasoning and capable self-expression characteristic of a liberal arts education guides all USD programs.

USD has a culture of dedication to an excellent student experience. Personalized mentoring by faculty, advisors, coaches and staff fosters the success of each student—whether a cautious freshman adjusting to college life, an adult learner finishing a degree online, or a doctoral student establishing a professional identity. Active involvement is a cardinal feature of a USD education. Division I athletic programs, student organizations, artistic productions and residence-hall communities are among the positive focal points for campus life. Students conduct research, perform as musicians, volunteer in service, study abroad and in many other ways build habits of contribution and leadership.

The university is home to an exceptionally accomplished faculty who provide a wide range of distinctive programs for undergraduates, graduate students and students pursuing professional degrees. As scholars and researchers, performers and artists, USD professors work individually and collaboratively to generate new knowledge, enhance teaching and learning, and address public needs. External funding, in combination with USD's own targeted investment in both infrastructure and personnel, nurtures areas of distinction within the broad scope of USD's research enterprise.

USD welcomes people from all backgrounds, embodying the values of diversity and inclusive excellence in its curricula, programs, policies and facilities. USD appeals to students, faculty and staff with a range of experiences, heritages and cultures. While celebrating its history as a uniquely South Dakotan institution, USD especially values indigenous and international perspectives. The university is committed both to a global outlook and to education and research serving Native Americans. Led by dedicated staff, faculty and administrators, the university's vibrant residential campus community promotes an atmosphere of individual engagement and—in tandem with the city of Vermillion—satisfies the social needs of a growing student body and an increasingly distinguished faculty. Rich collaborations with civic and business partners at the local, regional, national and international levels facilitate research and enhance students' educational opportunities. A publicly supported university that serves the public good, USD in 2017 has the handsome campus and supportive ethos of a small college along with the intellectual drive and creative energy of a research university.



CONTEXT

USD Student Body in 2017

The University of South Dakota's Strategic Plan for 2013–2017 assumes that current positive trends in enrollment, retention and graduation will continue. The five specific themes foundational to the Strategic Plan should be understood within this context.

USD aims to serve undergraduate and graduate students on campus and throughout the state and region. In September 2012, as the strategic planning process concludes, USD enrolled its largest new class since the mid-1990s, with 1,250 first-time, full-time freshmen, 2,594 graduate and professional students, and 10,284 students overall. By 2017, the university plans to increase the undergraduate student body to 6,000 full-time, on-campus students, an increase of 1,500 students. The entering class of first-time, full-time freshmen will be 1,500 students, half with an ACT better than 24. In fall 2017, enrollment in USD off-campus or distance courses is expected to be 5,100, with undergraduates accounting for about 75 percent of those students. The enrollment in graduate and professional programs is intended to increase to 3,000 students over the same period.

In order to fulfill these aims, USD must become increasingly effective at attracting students—undergraduate, graduate, and professional, first-time and transfer—from beyond South Dakota and contiguous states. USD anticipates that this effort will

yield a more diverse body of well-qualified students while ensuring a consistent level of access for South Dakota students.

The university will continue to emphasize success for undergraduate students. The first-year retention rate for the first-time, full-time freshmen who entered in fall 2012 was 74 percent. The university's goal is that first-year retention will be consistently above 80 percent and that progression thereafter will be near or above 90 percent per year, leading to a six-year graduation rate of 55 percent in 2017 for the entering class of 2011. Continued improvement in the degree-completion rate for USD undergraduates is a high priority.

The Strategic Plan emphasizes the ongoing development of a vibrant campus environment in Vermillion and assumes that the residential experience will continue to characterize a USD education. The university does not seek to increase the percentage of residential students taking distance courses. USD faculty will continue to teach students throughout the state at University Centers and via distance learning. USD's commitment to serve inclusively the educational needs of the state of South Dakota and beyond, combined with the accelerating integration of technology into students' daily lives, entail the continued support and enhancement of online and blended learning opportunities.

CONTEXT

Administrative, Financial, and Educational Setting

Thoughtful and deep coordination among the many academic and non-academic units of the university as well as with the South Dakota Board of Regents (BOR) will be necessary to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan. Several factors accentuate the need for such coordination at present.

First, the university is emerging from three years of budget reductions caused by economic problems in the state and the nation. The first years of the Strategic Plan thus coincide with the university's recovery from this difficult period. The plan presupposes that the university will work under conditions of very modest growth in state funding and tuition increases for the foreseeable future. This plan will require effective, efficient uses of facilities and personnel.

Second, the first year of the Strategic Plan is also the first year of USD's new budget model, Responsibility Centered Management (RCM). This model focuses financial decision-making in USD's schools and colleges. Both separately and collaboratively, the schools and colleges, along with the other units that support essential university functions, must take an active role in initiating and sustaining change that reflects the Strategic Plan.

Third, USD's transition to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletics concluded Aug. 1, 2012. As a D-I institution, USD will benefit from higher visibility, facilitating recruitment of out-of-state students as well as supporting effective competition for students within South Dakota. An important dimension of USD's public identity, D-I status will enhance USD's brand and will strengthen relations with alumni. At the same time, USD's D-I status will require ongoing investment, not only in public relations within and beyond the USD community, but also more substantially in athletic facilities, scholarships for athletes, and a variety of support and instructional functions to ensure the academic and athletic success of students on USD's intercollegiate teams.

Fourth, the USD Foundation has announced a new \$250 million campaign whose goals will be specified shortly. The Foundation's impressive record of success over the past 15 years suggests that it will meet or exceed the goals of the new campaign despite ongoing pressure from the nation's slow economic recovery. Without private support from donors, USD would be especially constrained in recruiting talented students with scholarships and in building facilities that attract and support students and faculty. However, like most institutions across the nation, USD receives most donations in the form of restricted funds which cannot be used for general support of university functions.

Finally, USD will remain responsive to the larger national setting of higher education. Changing federal policies governing research funding, distance education, and financial aid, among other subjects, affect USD's options and opportunities. Rapid pedagogical innovation, increasing expectations for assessment and accountability, and changes in the publishing industry, among other developments, challenge the university to enhance and update its own practices. Likewise, the university's ability to invest in facilities and personnel depends in part upon the economic climate of the region and the country. USD has positioned itself well over the past half decade. It must remain equally vigilant and innovative in the coming years.

Given the complexity of implementing a strategic plan in this context over a period of five years, and to ensure continuity of attention and leadership, a steering committee of faculty, staff, administrators and students will be established. The Steering Committee will be charged with assessment of progress toward the goals of the plan and with advising university leaders and the University Senate as changing circumstances warrant adjustments to the Strategic Plan.

STRATEGIC THEMES

The five strategic themes represent areas to which the university will devote particular effort in the coming years. They do not—and cannot—encompass every aspect of USD’s efforts in educating students, advancing knowledge, and serving the public. As a whole, the Strategic Plan presents a refinement of direction toward a future for which USD has already prepared conscientiously.





Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Student Experience

Goal 1

Enhance student engagement through interaction with faculty and staff.

Strong links between students and individual members of the faculty and staff promote students' engagement with the educational experience.

USD will foster engagement and learning by creating incentives to support substantive interactions between students and the faculty and staff. A closely related focus will be the quality and consistency of academic advising by both professional advisors and faculty members, with the aim of ensuring steady connections between students and their advisors and of helping students make the best possible progress towards their degrees.

Over the period of the Strategic Plan, USD's performance on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the university's exit survey of graduates, and surveys of faculty and staff will be used to assess the extent of students' engagement and to identify directions for further improvement. The six-year graduation rate will also be reviewed, with a total increase of 6 percent expected as a result of this work on this goal, among others.



Goal 2

Enrich academic experiences for graduate and professional students.

The university's excellent professional and graduate programs in business, fine arts, education, humanities, law, medicine and other health fields, natural sciences and social sciences make it unique within South Dakota and distinctive in the region. USD's graduate or professional students—about a quarter of the student body—have distinct academic and professional needs. Where they share classrooms with undergraduates in dual-listed courses, the expectations and opportunities provided to them must be distinct as well, promoting their full engagement by providing a suitably challenging academic experience.

Where appropriate and practical, the availability of graduate-only courses will be expanded and existing Ph.D. programs will be strengthened. Coursework and/or other academic experiences that promote professional development will be incorporated into the curriculum. Consistent with its intention to remain South Dakota's largest and most esteemed graduate institution, the university will also evaluate the possibility of adding a limited number of new graduate and/or professional programs.

At the conclusion of the Strategic Plan, the university anticipates a clear, substantive, and consistent distinction between graduate and undergraduate expectations in dual-listed courses; expanded graduate-only offerings in some programs; the inclusion of specifically professional required coursework and/or related academic experiences in most graduate programs; and increased student satisfaction with both academic experience and professional preparation as indicated on the university's exit survey of graduate students.

Goal 3

Develop and support a vibrant campus community that engages students and fosters their ongoing connection with USD.

Although USD serves students both on campus and at a distance, the campus community is the foundation of most USD students' experience.

To develop and support a vibrant campus community, recommendations of the Student Experience Committee's April 2011 report will be reconsidered. Assessment of these efforts will be the responsibility of a new standing committee, the Student Connection Committee, which will also be charged with recommending and helping to develop and implement additional means to increase student engagement and success from admission through graduation.

As a result of these steps among others, the first-year retention rate will reach over 80 percent, while the profile of the entering class will be similar or improved. The percentage of students who are unsuccessful in general education courses (dropping, failing or earning a D) is also expected to show a significant drop over the period of the plan, without loss of rigor in the courses. Attendance at events (athletics, fine arts, etc.), weekend residence on campus and the range and number of large events (more than 50 participants) are all expected to increase.



Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work

Goal 1

Expand interdisciplinary research, scholarship, and creative work.

An interdisciplinary approach to research, scholarship and creative work facilitates the development of new areas of investigation. Interdisciplinarity also enables researchers to take advantage of a wider range of their colleagues' expertise, recognizing the university's diverse scholarship in Arts & Sciences, Business, Education, Fine Arts, Health Sciences, Law and Medicine.

USD will develop its guidelines and organizational infrastructure for interdisciplinary research and scholarly activity. Ongoing projects in broad thematic areas that can attract further interdisciplinary scholarship, including research in emerging fields, will be identified. The university will invest in enhancement of scholarship in these defined areas. Areas connected with national trends in research will be a particular focus.

By the conclusion of the Strategic Plan, USD researchers will have participated in a larger number of collaborations receiving external funding for interdisciplinary projects. Interdisciplinary publications, awards, performances, and other such indications of scholarship across disciplinary boundaries will also have increased.

Goal 2

Increase national-level recognition in a select number of research and creative areas.

Awards, rankings, publications and citations by peers all recognize the contribution and impact of research and creative work in particular fields.

Although USD's faculty will continue to conduct research and produce creative work in all of their academic areas, the particular focus of the university during the period of the Strategic Plan will be to identify, promote and invest in scholarly work in a select number of niche areas. Special attention will be given to emerging areas and to research with potential for significant impact, whether for the advancement of knowledge or the economic development of the region. Academic units will have greater latitude in differentiating workload expectations among the faculty, fostering expanded opportunities for professors and students involved in research.

The University anticipates that attempts by USD faculty to gain external funding for projects in identified niche areas will increase above the 2011 level, with both the number and total dollar amount of grants received expected to rise. A corresponding increase is anticipated in publications, awards and other such evidence of contribution and national recognition.



Liberal Arts and Learning

Goal 1

Maintain and enhance critical components of the liberal arts in both curricular and co-curricular arenas.

In 2007, the Association of American Colleges and Universities defined liberal education as:

“An approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity and change. It emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility as well as strong intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and includes a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.”

In spirit and by statute, USD is South Dakota’s public liberal arts university. The university remains dedicated to the liberal education of its students.

The university will institute a variety of measures to ensure deep awareness of the academic values of the liberal arts, including citizenship and social responsibility, among faculty and staff, as well as students. USD will materially support enhancing the liberal arts across the curriculum, including in the University Honors Program.

A baseline assessment of curricular and co-curricular congruence with the essential elements of liberal education will be undertaken early in the period of the Strategic Plan. The university expects subsequent assessment of student learning outcomes, curriculum and programs to show renewed strength in the liberal arts and in the commitment of faculty, staff and students to liberal education.

Goal 2

Graduate globally aware students.

As a liberal arts education liberates the mind, opening it to new truths and ideas; it also places priority on the educated citizen’s awareness of the full scope of human existence.

In late 2011, USD changed the graduation requirements for the bachelor’s degree to stipulate an approved course in globalization and global issues. The number of such courses will continue to grow. Further, the university will expand students’ opportunities for direct international experiences.

Over the period of the Strategic Plan, the university seeks to increase by at least 50 percent the number of globalization/global issues courses. USD anticipates that by the end of the period a majority of students will select more than one such course. An upward trend is also expected in the availability of co-curricular experiences with a global component. Most graduate and professional programs are expected to include required coursework with an international dimension. The number of students participating in international programs will double. Also contributing to global awareness at USD will be an increasingly large and culturally diverse group of international students.



Goal 3

Graduate broadly informed students who are capable of complex reasoning, critical thinking, and effective self-expression.

Although the specific content of a liberal education will vary across the student body, the skills of complex reasoning, critical thinking and effective self-expression are common to all liberally educated university graduates. USD supports several initiatives to foster students' practice of and proficiency in these skills.

The university prizes its ongoing commitment to undergraduate research and to the University Honors Program, both USD "signature programs." In late 2011, a new upper-division intensive writing requirement was added, thereby completing implementation of all recommendations in the 2004 President's Writing Task Force Report. Courses designed to meet this requirement were taught for the first time in fall 2012.

Steadily increasing participation in the various venues for undergraduate research is anticipated during the period of the Strategic Plan. Independent, rubric-based assessment of student work in designated intensive writing courses will seek to confirm adequate and increasing proficiency in the skills identified. In addition, USD will add to the BOR-mandated Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) exam a fifth section, Critical Reasoning, to evaluate students' progress in this area.

Goal 4

Communicate USD's liberal arts identity within and beyond the university.

USD's identity as a liberal arts university is fundamental to how both university citizens and community members perceive USD.

The reaffirmation of USD's liberal arts identity in the Strategic Plan will be reflected in consistent internal communications that respect the distinct roles of faculty, staff and students. The university will develop and extend opportunities (learning/living communities, first-year seminars, capstone courses, service-learning, etc.) to educate students about USD's liberal arts identity, promoting their investment in liberal arts education and their understanding of its application to their respective areas of study. In addition, USD's marketing will promote the university's identity, particularly to its primary audience of prospective undergraduates.

By the conclusion of the Strategic Plan, exit surveys of graduates are expected to show a greater awareness of and commitment to the liberal arts. Availability of and students' participation in related opportunities will have grown, and tracking of media coverage and social media presence will show that USD's identity is presented with increasing clarity and favor.



Diversity and Inclusiveness

Goal 1

Commit to a systematic, intentional, comprehensive, and holistic approach to diversity and inclusive excellence.

The university's long-standing aim of increasing the diversity of its students, staff and faculty will be advanced more effectively if approached through inclusive excellence, with responsibility for diversity and inclusiveness jointly held by all members of the university community. Led by USD's Associate Vice President for Diversity, in collaboration with a newly established President's Inclusiveness Council, the University Senate, the Student Government Association, and senior administrative leadership groups such as the Executive Committee and Provost's Council, the university will undertake a concerted program in inclusive excellence.

Goal 2

Integrate diversity and inclusive excellence into all areas of university life.

To establish the values and practices of inclusive excellence, diversity must be incorporated deeply and broadly into the intellectual and social life of the university.

Efforts to assess the integration of human diversity into the curriculum have already begun. Based on an initial comprehensive assessment, best practices for diversity in the curriculum will be identified, refined and consistently promoted. A diversity recruitment plan that includes new methods of attracting faculty, staff and students will be developed and implemented, accompanied by a diversity retention plan that includes physical space, specialized resources and support for students from diverse populations.

A follow-up assessment at the close of the Strategic Plan will show substantially greater integration of diversity in the curriculum. The percentage of university citizens of diverse backgrounds will increase significantly, with growth in the number of degree-seeking international students contributing to that trend. First-year retention of students with diverse backgrounds will match or exceed that of the overall undergraduate student body. The percentage of such students graduating within six years will increase at the same rate as that of the overall student body.

Goal 2

Become a regional leader in initiatives and outreach for inclusive excellence and diversity.

Both the university and the region stand to benefit from greater access to USD education for members of diverse populations. Partnerships between USD and tribal colleges and universities will be mutually advantageous. Likewise, USD has much to offer and to gain in establishing partnerships with international institutions of higher learning. By the conclusion of the Strategic Plan, multiple new collaborative projects (including articulation agreements) with tribal colleges will be in place. New cooperative arrangements for student exchanges and for research and scholarly activities will be pursued with institutions abroad.





Community and University Relations

Goal 1

Create a welcoming atmosphere and a positive and constructive relationship for the community and USD.

USD plays an important role in the state and region. Within that context, the mutual interdependence of USD and the city of Vermillion is unique. USD students are an important economic and cultural constituency for the local community, and the community is an essential context for many students' university experiences.

Assessment of the current state of relations between the USD and the community will enable the university to work more effectively with the community to identify not only opportunities for closer relationships and joint activities but also problems requiring action. A committee comprised of USD students, faculty, administrators and staff as well as Vermillion community members will be charged with addressing these issues. To further enhance the positive relationship between students and community members, the university will promote activities and communicate policy changes that result from the committee's work. Regular interaction between a cabinet-level representative of USD and community leaders is anticipated, and USD expects to include a city of Vermillion representative on the committee responsible for the campus site master plan.

By the close of the Strategic Plan, a notable increase in positive interaction between community and students will be evident in local media coverage of the university and in increased attendance at university-sponsored events. The exit survey of graduates will also show an improved experience for students in residence.

Goal 2

Collaborate with community leaders on targeted economic development.

The University has a strong interest in supporting the efforts of local community leaders in economic development. A representative from USD will be available to assist with the establishment of new businesses and other employment opportunities in the Vermillion area. Research into the role of USD's peer institutions in promoting economic development will yield specific recommendations to enhance the university's involvement. The university will also seek to partner with regional technical institutes to facilitate workforce development, an effort that will result in an increased rate of graduation for students entering USD via articulation agreements. New articulation agreements will be considered as well, and there will be additional course offerings on campus or online.

Goal 3

Explore and attempt to increase partnerships between USD and local school districts.

USD students, facilities and personnel have much to offer to local schools. The university will expand its services to area high schools with curriculum support through dual credit arrangements, among other means. Use of USD facilities such as the Wellness Center may be offered to K-12 students as incentives or rewards for top performance. Systematic arrangements for attendance by K-12 students at events at the DakotaDome, the College of Fine Arts and elsewhere on campus, will enrich the educational experience of younger students in the community.



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