

Positioning Suffolk University for the Future:

2017-2019 Strategic Plan

Suffolk University faces incredible opportunity in the coming years, and it is critical that we are prepared to take full advantage of the moment. Like other universities, we also face significant challenges, and we need to position ourselves to not only meet them, but to excel in what is a hyper-competitive higher education marketplace. In short, we don't have the luxury of waiting or resting in place. And for that matter, we don't want to as this University has a history and a culture of embracing challenge and opportunity.

It is with both immediate and longer term opportunities and challenges in mind that we have created this two-year extension to the University's strategic plan. It was drafted based on broad input from the Suffolk community. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni all offered insight into where the University's focus must be to maximize our success and best position Suffolk for the future.

Suffolk is not immune to the many challenges that face higher education today, but Suffolk also has clear advantages, including an education that is rooted in experiential learning and that draws on the resources of one of the world's most vibrant cities as well as the world itself. We provide a personal educational experience for each of our students, one that is grounded in engagement with faculty and staff and where we draw on appropriate technology to enhance that experience. We play a critical role in the region's higher education and economic landscape by connecting students from all walks of life with the innovative programs and relevant experience that prepare them to succeed in fast-changing industries and organizations. Our commitment to continue serving our students, this city and its industries is unwavering.

We also have a 79,000 strong alumni network that is making significant contributions to both the Suffolk and wider global communities. Finally, Suffolk University has increased its financial resources and displayed budgetary flexibility in recent years. Between fiscal years 2013 and 2016, unrestricted net assets grew to \$286 million, which was an increase of 29 percent. University operating performance has been strong, with an average operating margin of more than 5 percent each year during that period.

To build on these strengths we need to develop initiatives that will make us even more distinctive and that take advantage of our location; our ability and history to connect students with the region, the nation and the world; our strong mission of access and opportunity – we have a long history as a first ladder for a global education; as well as our capacity to integrate students within our community. And we need to position ourselves as a university that is much greater than the sum of its parts.

In the coming years we also have an opportunity to expand our visibility and reach across the region, the nation, and the world. To ensure our ongoing financial stability, we must maintain our international enrollments and continue to internationalize the Suffolk experience while also

paying close attention to our domestic markets. We need to continue fostering a culture that uses data-informed decision making, emphasizing broad consultation. And we must work to maintain, or even improve upon, the strong national rankings we have received of late.

The plan affirms our commitment to opportunities both at home in Boston and around the world. It calls for expanding partnerships and experiential learning opportunities in Boston that will support and benefit our students. Suffolk University is interwoven into the fabric of Boston, and our unparalleled downtown location offers limitless opportunity for our students. The strategic plan emphasizes partnerships with Boston-based organizations and businesses, along with experiential and service learning opportunities that maximize the benefits to our students from living and studying in the city.

At the same time the plan also recognizes that Suffolk's large international population and its global perspective are major strengths for the University. An important part of the Suffolk experience includes students from different backgrounds engaging with one another and sharing perspectives. The strategic plan embraces the University's international reach and the global experiences that we offer both at home and abroad. It puts a strong emphasis on international enrollment and recruitment as well as programs and experiences that enhance a global perspective. It provides for numerous enhanced opportunities for students to grow their global understanding, including through a pilot program for four-year degrees at the Madrid campus starting this fall along with more short-term international travel programs for Boston-based students.

The plan also embraces the University's diversity – among faculty, staff, and students – as an enormous strength. It calls for a heightened and focused effort on increasing diversity and inclusion within the employee and student community and within the curriculum.

A focus on innovation in teaching and in the curriculum will ensure that we continue to create new academic programs and initiatives that prepare students at all levels for professional pathways in dynamic and fast-changing work environments. The plan commits to expanded opportunities for experiential education as well as to an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum, including by increasing the number of ongoing majors and minors that draw on the faculty of more than one school.

The plan also embraces our ability to respond to student and industry needs with new degree programs and courses linked to market demand. It calls for a small expansion of the number of doctoral level programs that we offer and adding master's programs that address market demand. And it commits to elevating our profile regionally, nationally, and globally, through strategic marketing and communications efforts as well as through a focus on national rankings. It underscores the importance of career outcomes and career development.

The strategic plan extension calls for broad investments in our human capital and acknowledges the financial, logistical, and facility support needed to maximize our success. And it strongly supports our teacher-scholar model. It emphasizes many areas that are critical to our future,

including enrollment, retention, diversity, fundraising, facilities, partnerships, marketing and communications, and others.

In short, the plan is designed to help us embrace challenges and opportunities ahead and excel in doing what we do best – delivering an exceptional educational experience to students from Boston, the region, the nation, and around the globe.

To advance this strategy, and to set the University on a path of renewed growth, we are committed to seven guiding imperatives. Below are each of those imperatives and a sample of key initiatives that support them:

- I. Enhancing Student Success:** Provide an integrated, student-centered experience, highlighted by strong mentoring relationships that develop students' full potential
 - i. Expand the one week freshman in Madrid Global Gateway program to reach 15 percent each year by the fall of 2019. Maintain small undergraduate class sizes while allowing for size flexibility based on appropriate pedagogy by discipline and approach, with a University-wide targeted student faculty ratio of 15 to 1.
 - ii. Increase the percentage of first-year undergraduate courses taught by full-time faculty
 - iii. Develop new tools to support academic advising through predictive analytics and develop new mentoring programs
 - iv. Expand and strengthen leadership, community service and honors programs and initiatives to increase the number of cohort-shared activities

- II. Developing Innovative Global Thinkers:** Offer an education that prepares students to be innovative thinkers who can succeed in a rapidly evolving employment landscape and in an increasingly global community
 - i. Pilot a four-year BA degree program at the Madrid campus with a major in international relations
 - ii. Increase the number of Boston campus undergraduate classes that include a short-term travel component
 - iii. Expand doctoral, master's, and undergraduate level programs that are of high academic quality and meet a market demand
 - iv. Increase the number of ongoing majors and minors that draw on the faculty of more than one school
 - v. In the College of Arts & Sciences implement a foundational career development module
 - vi. Increase our focus on programs in intellectual property and compliance

- III. Forging Partnerships in Boston and Around the World:** Leverage our borderless campuses in Boston and Madrid to develop local, national, and global experiential learning and career opportunities for our students
 - i. Develop new pathways programs for international students

- ii. Expand partnerships with Boston Public Schools and related nonprofits, including piloting a dual enrollment partnership with BPS
- iii. Increase the number of civic engagement and service learning sites connected with Boston-area nonprofits
- iv. Explore training opportunities for corporations and law firms in areas of Suffolk's strengths
- v. Develop and promote alumni programs that foster connections with the University community and increase volunteer involvement and mentoring among our alumni

IV. Supporting the Teacher-Scholar Model: Develop, recognize, and reward excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service

- i. Recruit teacher-scholars in areas of strength and emerging growth
- ii. Provide appropriate funding for travel in support of scholarly engagement and for faculty and professional learning communities
- iii. Promote interdisciplinary course development and scholarship through a program of internal grants
- iv. Reward outstanding faculty work through various annual awards and identify additional ways to incentivize impactful service
- v. Implement a new academic advising model to improve student engagement

V. Building a Cohesive Community Committed to Diversity, Sustainability, and Impact on the Region: Foster an inclusive community among students, faculty, staff, and alumni

- i. Ensure ongoing training for all faculty and staff on diversity, implicit bias, and classroom management
- ii. Expand student leadership opportunities for commuters through the development of a commuter student organization and increased activities
- iii. Launch the new Suffolk.edu web ecosystem with a focus on storytelling and dynamic content and that improves the user experience
- iv. Raise the University's visibility with alumni and make them more aware of their alma mater
- v. Establish a sustainability committee in collaboration with the Center for Urban Ecology and Sustainability (CUES)

VI. Strengthening Our Infrastructure: Ensure we invest efficiently in our infrastructure to support our institutional goals

- i. Ensure the University's information technology plan supports flexible curricular innovation and infrastructure needs
- ii. Ensure all course and web materials comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- iii. In collaboration with the Advisory Committee for Space Administration, analyze current space usage and work to enhance use of space to meet ongoing needs, including fostering community
- iv. Advance increased housing opportunities by identify potential privately funded housing project

VII. Ensuring Financial Stability: Make decisions and pursue strategies that support the long-term financial sustainability of the institution

- i. Ensure a sound financial plan underpins operation of the institution
- ii. Ensure that the budget is aligned with strategic planning
- iii. Support structures and methods designed to foster the generation of unrestricted and restricted funding from external sources in collaboration with Institutional Advancement and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)
- iv. Raise funds in support of the priorities of the strategic plan

Please note: Members of the Suffolk community may login [here](#) to access the full plan, which faculty and staff should use as a framework for their work.