

Dear Fitchburg State Trustees,

In anticipation of discussion about the strategic plan at the next board meeting, I am sharing two documents and a few related questions for your review and consideration in advance. The two documents are:

1. **A draft “envisioned future state” document that articulates in one place how Fitchburg State stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, alums, trustees), based on the extensive outreach done in the fall, hope the University will be better, different, or stronger in five years.**

This draft has been vetted with the Executive Cabinet and other leadership groups on campus, and I am hoping the trustees now will embrace it as being a directionally sound foundation on which the campus community, led by our planning steering committee, should continue building. You can think of this expression of shared aspirations as representing the desired outcomes that should result from implementation of the next five-year strategic plan. Therefore, all goals and strategies (the guts of the strategic plan) are being developed with this envisioned future state serving as the plan’s “destination.”

As you review the draft, please consider these questions:

- What resonates most, or excites you most, about the vision of FSU in five years?
- Do you have any big ideas for what FSU might do to reach the destination?
- What strikes you as being an urgent priority for the University?

2. **A diagram that identifies five vision-supporting goals that reflect the areas of greatest common concern to the Fitchburg community based on what was learned during the extensive and inclusive diagnostics phase of the planning process, which has included intensive work in five multi-constituent theme committees over several months.** These goals are intersected by what the Strategic Planning Steering Committee has identified (and leadership groups have affirmed) represent five “strategic imperatives”—non-negotiable must-dos rather than aspirational goals.

Our shared commitment to these imperatives must be reflected in all five goals and ultimately throughout the entire strategic plan:

- **Quality:** FSU’s commitment to excellence in all aspects of the University’s programming and operations is paramount and must not be compromised.
- **Identity:** FSU must assert a distinctive identity and clear value proposition in order to thrive in the increasingly competitive higher education arena.
- **Equity:** FSU must provide all members of its community equitable access to opportunity and must therefore eliminate barriers to the recruitment, retention, participation, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded or under-represented populations.
- **Inclusivity:** Every member of the FSU student body, faculty and staff must feel respected, heard, affirmed, supported, and valued.
- **Accountability:** Members of the FSU community must be responsible for their actions and hold each other accountable for upholding common values, supporting shared goals, and maintaining public trust

The planning process is proceeding as smoothly, flexibly, and efficiently as we can manage under extraordinary circumstances. I am grateful that so much progress had been made before the coronavirus crisis ground life on campus to a screeching halt. Our consultant and steering committee plan to use technology in the days and weeks ahead in order to advance the process and continue fleshing out the plan. Our commitment to keeping FSU stakeholders involved and informed remains strong, and we will be creative in our outreach and engagement efforts.

I will certainly keep you posted relative to any change in our timeline and expectations for when we will have a draft plan to share first with you trustees and then with the BHE for our Touchpoint II meeting. The Commissioner is obviously aware that campuses engaged in strategic planning processes this year are dealing with significant unforeseen challenges; it is possible our timeline will need to change as a result, but for now we will keep plugging along.

When the board meets on March 31, I look forward to your feedback on the documents being shared today and also to engaging you in conversation about a “unifying concept” that has emerged as a bold aspiration for Fitchburg State. The provost and I believe this vision or aspiration for who FSU is, how it is unique, and why it matters encompasses the themes that have been most resonant through the process so far; just as or perhaps even more importantly, we believe it could excite, unite and motivate the campus community as we roll out and implement the strategic plan in the months ahead.

Rich