What

In order to provide greater access to higher education, The University of Arizona must simultaneously be aggressive in increasing the numbers of qualified students admissible to the institution and steadily improve the student retention and graduation rates. Creating student access and facilitating student success concretely advances the Arizona Board of Regents goal of doubling the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded by 2020.

The Division of Student Affairs is uniquely positioned to provide programs and services that move The University of Arizona forward in attaining this ambitious goal. Early recruitment programs have elementary and middle school students and their families appropriately planning for success in the academic courses that will enable the students to qualify for admission to the University. University financial aid programs, including Arizona Assurance, provide the financial means to make higher education accessible. Student retention programs, including tutoring, student success programs, vibrant residence hall initiatives that connect with the academic mission, and co-curricular leadership programs, result in direct increases in student persistence and graduation.

The Division of Student Affairs has 4,000 employees, operates more than 40 facilities, and generates more than 80% of its own budget.

For the University to be successful in its student recruitment and retention efforts, the Division must show tangible results. Our productivity is dependent on our ability to create a culture that values change, innovation, cost-efficiency, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

For Student Affairs, success is defined as:

• Demonstrating expertise and national leadership in recruiting the most diverse and talented group of students possible and providing services and programs designed to retain them through timely graduation,
• Working in explicit partnerships with academic affairs,
• Employing entrepreneurial methods to support our efforts,
• Developing and supporting our staff.
**Why**
Amid the extraordinary budgetary changes, the University and the public at large will continue to have high expectations of our division. Among them are that we bring in high quality and ever-expanding classes, contribute to improved retention rates, and manage crises in sharp and proactive ways. Achieving these in a world-class way requires us to continually be innovative and a step ahead of our national peers. Our student life programs, services, and facilities must be integrally connected to our academic community, more efficient, and more nimble in responding to this changing budgetary landscape.

**When**
Over the last two years, Student Affairs has grown as a division to include Enrollment Management and Student Retention. We will use the next year to transform the division into one that capitalizes on our resources and best practices.

**How**
In August, a small group of Student Affairs staff gathered for an "innovative thinking session" to consider how to accomplish the above productivity goals. This meeting led to the formation of teams to develop ideas to strengthen our infrastructure, streamline and focus our service delivery to students and develop innovative programming that will distinguish us from our peers.

The teams' recommendations have been shared with over 400 staff, students, faculty and community members. With feedback gleaned from these meetings, new teams are currently refining the major concepts which will ultimately be implemented.

**Goals for 2009/10**

- *Recruiting the most diverse and talented students in the most cost-effective ways*
  - Increasing our numbers of first-generation and low-income students by focusing on early outreach activities and supporting the Arizona Assurance program to ensure that college education is affordable for all students.
  - Establishing a Next Steps Center to coordinate resources between several units in order to make a clearer path to campus for newly admitted students; increase our percentage of students who enroll; and make better use of currently underutilized staff.

- *Providing services and programs designed to retain students through graduation and provide them with a positive and transformative student experience.*
Our approach to developing world class learning support services centers around a concept we call “The 50.” The 50 is a philosophy that makes a dramatic and purposeful effort to engage our students in smaller groups (approx. 50) with a team of faculty, student peers and health and wellness coaches. This approach also connects all members of our community to the student experience in a new way. In short, this method is designed to bring about broad based cultural change. The 50 will create a community that is dynamic, engaging, intellectual, diverse, respectful, ethical, civil and safe by developing teams that support groups of new students and scale down this overwhelming university into an intimate space that allows for connections to happen in new ways. Students will be able to bring their unique talents and gifts to our community in a way that our current structure does not permit to happen.

While the “curriculum” of The 50 has not been established, we will develop it in a combination of electronic and personal formats. At the center of The 50 is the Digital Commons. The Digital Commons will allow students to connect with their team, other students, and have new experiences in a way that is personal, portable, and peer-to-peer. Although we do not know how the students will connect with their 50, we are exploring options of either randomly assigning by academic interest, social interest, academic ability, cultural affiliation, etc.

As we work towards increasing the yield of students who enroll at The University of Arizona, we are also simultaneously working to increase their retention, persistence and timely graduation. Our currently decentralized academic support programs result in redundancies and inefficiencies, so we plan to centralize them into a single unit that delivers our best services in a modified, centralized and comprehensive format. In addition, we have been approached by the UA Writing Center to include writing support within our comprehensive unit. We are currently exploring methods to achieve this.

Providing clear and direct services that assist the students in navigating their educational journey has significant implications for improved retention. A newly configured student transitions area will focus on developing and maintaining the student community from Orientation to Commencement through a re-invented orientation process, summer bridge programs, transfer student services, success classes, gap year experiences, parent and family programs, and more.

Our Millennial Student Research Project and Campus Climate studies of recent years have taught us that students have evolved in their views of diversity. The increasing diversity of our student body as well as the increasingly multiracial identities they express require that the university move beyond our current physically separated, ethnic-based center model. At the same time we must continue to ensure robust community conversation and action around diversity, access, tolerance, sustainability, and other issues that contribute to a just and civil learning environment. Therefore, we plan to develop a new area around access, unity and social justice that will bring together students of multiple identity backgrounds and interests in alliance with our Social Justice Center to create a more vibrant and relevant campus experience around diversity.
• **Employing entrepreneurial methods to support our efforts.**

  o Students are increasingly requesting specialized and personalized services and have expressed willingness to pay for them, so we are exploring the possibility of providing these services at additional cost for interested students. These services include but are not limited to: academic coaching, note taking services, and concierge services in residence halls. We will seek opportunities to leverage corporate relationships and business opportunities. Examples include installing ATM machines in all residence halls and expanding the Pro-Shop as part of the Recreation Center expansion.

• **Streamlining our infrastructure.**

  o Mergers of the last few years have created an incoherent blend of services as vestiges of previous organization. We will streamline these services as follows.

    ❖ Centralization of IT sources.
    ❖ Centralization of Marketing.
    ❖ Centralization of Business Functions.

  We anticipate that these changes will improve services for students, result in considerable costs savings, and provide new sources of revenue.