


2024 -2029 Strategic Plan

May 2024



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW ORLEANS

*Department of Planning
and Urban Studies (PLUS)*



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University of New Orleans Department of Planning and Urban Studies Department (PLUS)

2024-2029 Strategic Plan



The PLUS 2024-2029 strategic plan outlines a roadmap for positioning Planning and Urban Studies (PLUS) as a leader in the South in education, applied research and civic engagement.

UNO strives to maintain its ranking as one of the top 10 accredited Urban Planning Programs in the South and a top 10 small planning program. To achieve this milestone and others, the strategic plan identifies key goals to build the capacity, brand, and impact of the unit.

Vision

UNO's Department of Planning and Urban Studies is nationally recognized for providing a world-class learning laboratory for the cultivation of innovative professionals and civic leaders who help build more livable, sustainable, resilient, just and, equitable places in the 21st century.

Mission

Our mission is to educate students to be effective professionals with distinctive technical and problem-solving competencies through an interdisciplinary program of innovative teaching, applied research, and community engagement. We strive to develop solutions through the integration and synergy of diverse disciplines that address the policy, design, and the practice of planning, transportation, and urban studies. We engage in the practical application of research, scholarship, and education that changes lives, inspires hope, and builds communities throughout the New Orleans region, the Gulf South, and the world. PLUS serves as an economic and social engine for progress in cities and regions. What you learn here, you can take anywhere.

Values

PLUS is committed to inclusive excellence. We emphasize social and environmental justice, social responsibility, and interconnectedness of place and people. Through applied research and place-based learning, we prioritize diverse perspectives, collaboration, innovation, critical and creative thinking. We seek public planning, policy, and design initiatives that maximize mobility and opportunities for all people, especially those who have been marginalized, to participate meaningfully in society.

Goals and Objectives

I. Organizational Structure

Goal: Achieve an organizational position within UNO that allows the department to best excel and support the university's urban research mission. The ultimate principle of effective organizational design is to make it easy and motivating for people to collaborate, innovate and achieve. After multiple departmental and college mergers, PLUS' organizational structure needs review.

Objective 1: Review departmental structure to improve work flow between academic programs and research entities.

Objective 2: Review position with COLAEHD to determine which academic programs/center/institute/certificates should or could be included in the PLUS umbrella and which could or should be relocated.

Objective 3: Review the position of the department within COLAEHD, College of Business, College of Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, or other college arrangement.

Objective 4: Determine the appropriateness of the creation of a school and all entities there within.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Advocate for PLUS to have a permanent chair that would provide stability in the department.

Action Item 2: Strengthen relationships through active, in-person activities.

Action Item 3: Invite the Dean of COLAEHD to faculty meetings regularly.

Action Item 4: Request the Dean of COLAEHD to reinstate the College Leadership Committee.

Action Item 5: Work with the Dean of COLAEHD to establish a process to determine an appropriate faculty/program ratio.

Action Item 6: Establish a practice where the Director of Academic Services works with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to report on the number of students from other departments and colleges in our courses.

Measures:

- ◆ Updated PLUS organizational chart
- ◆ Annual report produced, reviewed and shared
- ◆ Partner development and management strategy
- ◆ Director of Academic Services' report each semester after the 14th class day

II. Students

Goal A: Students are PLUS' highest priority. We are committed to increasing student enrollment and retention and increasing the diversity of undergraduate and graduate students.

Objective 1: Continue to implement curriculum and instruction strategies to increase enrollment.

Objective 2: Create and implement a focused student recruitment and communications strategy, including materials and website.

Objective 3: Continue/maintain financial support of the majority of PLUS graduate students through graduate assistantships, internships, and professional development.

Objective 4: Improve student retention by clarifying course offerings, providing campus life activities, supporting student organizations, and active advising.

Measures:

- ◆ Number of completed applications
- ◆ Enrollment totals
- ◆ Retention rate
- ◆ Number of graduates
- ◆ Total Student Credit Hours
- ◆ Student Diversity
- ◆ Certificate Completions
- ◆ Type and amount of Student Financial Support



Implementation

Action Item 1: Establish a practice of the Director of Academic Services' working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to report on student numbers, demographics and retention rates annually.

Action Item 2: Establish a practice of the Coordinator of Business Affairs to report on expenditures related to advertising and marketing at each faculty meeting.

Action Item 3: Work with UNO's Creative Services to develop a PLUS-branded template for marketing, advertising, and social media.

Action Item 4: Establish a practice of the Coordinator of Business Affairs to report on expenditures related to student support at each faculty meeting.

Action Item 5: Create a diversity statement that explains how PLUS defines diversity.

Action Item 6: Review, update and promote PLUS' articulation agreements.

Goal B: Engage students in career exploration and professional development that encourages professional networking, identification of career opportunities and life-long learning.

Objective 1: Expand academic services to include career counseling and placement guidance services for internships and post-graduation employment, in partnership with the university, alumni and professional associations such as the Louisiana Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Objective 2: Provide exposure to and information on careers in the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors through internships and coursework.

Objective 3: Maintain and strengthen partnerships with professional, civic, and community organizations, employers, and industry stakeholders.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Work with employers, industry and community partners to conduct professional development activities such as site visits, tours, and job shadowing.

Action Item 2: Utilize the listserv to ensure wide dissemination of internships and career opportunities. The Director of Academic Services will track posts.

Action Item 3: Update PLUS job and skills materials.

Action Item 4: Faculty and staff will serve on community and industry committees and boards.

Action Item 5: Faculty and staff will establish a system of reporting course guest lectures, site visits and professional development activities.



PLUS students tour the Port of New Orleans, 2023

Measures:

- ◆ Number of professional development activities
- ◆ Formalization and measurement of internships across programs
- ◆ Report on service learning, capstone and practicum courses
- ◆ Report of course guest lectures, professional development activities and site visits at each faculty meeting
- ◆ Student job placement rate
- ◆ Director of Academic Services annual listserv report

III. Faculty and Staff

Goal A: Recruit and retain high-quality faculty to meet our program goals

Objective 1: Meet university targets for faculty/student ratio.

Objective 2: Retain and recruit faculty for three new positions (with at least 1 at the associate/full level) for a total of nine full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty with expertise that fits the department's long-term goals.

Objective 3: Increase the diversity of faculty to reflect the demographic diversity of the region through active recruitment of minority candidates.

Goal B: Provide faculty/staff with the necessary resources to meet the teaching, scholarly and applied research, mentoring, outreach, business management, and advising needs of the various programs.

Objective 1: Advocate for university resources for salary, faculty/staff travel, technology, and professional development.

Objective 2: Ensure all faculty produce high-quality research and publications, course instruction and curriculum development, and service to the university, the profession, and the community.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Create a mechanism for reporting the benefits of foundation funds to the department, college and university.

Action Item 2: Create a comparative analysis of PLUS' salaries and resources to peer institutions.

Action Item 3: The Department Chair will provide stakeholders with an annual PLUS summary of faculty productivity.



UNO Faculty + Administrators with international guests,
"15-Minute City in New Orleans" Conference, 2024

Measures:

- ◆ Number and diversity of faculty/staff hired and retained
- ◆ Graduate faculty status
- ◆ Faculty/staff salary adjustments
- ◆ Funding for travel and professional development
- ◆ Revised performance evaluation and tenure/promotion policies to align with newly adopted University RTP

IV. Curriculum and Instruction

Goal: Continue to evaluate, and if necessary revise, curricula to ensure dynamic, interdisciplinary programs of study that integrate enhanced experiential learning opportunities and professional skills development.

Objective 1: Identify core student competencies that should be achieved by program.

Objective 2: Identify and coordinate student learning objectives within and across PLUS programs.

Objective 3: Identify, and if necessary, enhance the integration of analytic and research methods, technical writing, communication techniques, and professional tool development in the curriculum to improve student learning, competencies, and success.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Develop schedule and assign tasks for periodic curriculum review

Measures:

- ♦ Review of core curriculum every three to five years for each program to: (a) Identify learning objectives, and (b) conduct content analysis of core competencies by theme and program
- ♦ Demonstrate programmatic competencies
- ♦ Coordinate competencies, experiential learning activities, and professional skill/tool development across programs

V. Research

Goal: Maintain high levels of research and visibility to enhance student learning, faculty/staff scholarship, professional development and community engagement.

Objective 1: Advocate for rewarding faculty and staff financially and professionally for securing research grant funding for student support, equipment, facilities, administration as well as student professional development (i.e., Graduate Research Assistantships or Classroom Projects).

Objective 2: Expand interdisciplinary research partnerships with other UNO departments and colleges.

Objective 3: Advocate for additional faculty so we can further increase external grant/contract activity.

Objective 4: Increase exposure of PLUS research by:

- ♦ Participating in internal and external conferences and workshops annually including Innovate UNO
- ♦ Leading professional and community service projects;
- ♦ Publishing in scholarly and professional publications; and
- ♦ Effectively communicating how PLUS assists UNO in serving as an anchor institution for the city through community service, outreach, and university media, and public relations marketing.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Complete and share annual report documenting outcome metrics and next steps to support departmental excellence

Measures:

- ◆ Number of proposals submitted
- ◆ Amount of research dollars secured
- ◆ Number of research partnerships
- ◆ Number of students engaged in research projects
- ◆ Number and impact of conferences, publications, and community service projects
- ◆ University, media, and public relations coverage
- ◆ Community service, board, and other activities that reflect our status as a community anchor institution

VI. Community Engagement

Goal: Increase the capacity and visibility of PLUS as a community resource.

Objective 1: Maintain community partnerships

Objective 2: Identify new opportunities for student experiential learning, applied research, and impactful community engagement.

Implementation:

Action Item 1: Create PLUS processes/procedures for community engagement and technical assistance tracking.

**Measures:**

- ◆ Community engagement annual calendar
- ◆ Inventory of community partners
- ◆ Community engagement reporting process
- ◆ Technical assistance provided

VII. Alumni Engagement and Professional Development

Goal: Facilitate and support a strong collaborative relationship with alumni and professionals in the fields of planning, urban studies, and transportation.

Objective 1: Utilize the PLUS Strategic Plan Task Force to champion, guide, and support the implementation and funding of the 2024-2029 Strategy to provide input, direction, and support for curriculum development, career services and professional development programming, student internships, and assessment of student performance.

Objective 2: Work with internal and external university partners to increase alumni engagement, and program visibility .

Objective 3: Utilize an alumni committee that can work with academic services to host events on key urban issues, disseminate research results, provide professional development activities and fundraise for the PLUS foundation account.

Implementation:

Action item 1: Create the PLUS Strategic Plan Task Force

Action item 2: Create an alumni committee

Measures:

- ◆ Number of alumni outreach activities
- ◆ Number of alumni donors to the PLUS foundation
- ◆ Amount of new donations to the PLUS foundation



VIII. Facilities and Technology

Goal: Maintain visible functional spaces that provide an active and engaging academic environment for faculty/staff and students.

Objective 1: Work with COLAEHD to renovate and update classrooms,

Objective 2: Advocate for modernization and maintenance of the design lab.

Objective 3: Advocate for hardware, software, and information technology support for students and labs.



The PLUS "Yeti" and Captain BrUNO, UNO Mardi Gras Parade 2024

Implementation:

Action item 1: Inventory and report on necessary upgrades and improvements to classrooms and labs.

Action item 2: Meet with IT Director

Action item 3: Advocate for faculty technology council

Measures:

- ♦ Maintain research suite
- ♦ PLUS academic facilities/classrooms updated [track requests]
- ♦ Computer lab hardware and software expanded and upgraded



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