AGENDA ITEM: 3.b

DATE: December 10, 2015

TITLE: Comments from Presiding Officer of the Portland State University Faculty Senate

ATTACHED BACKGROUND READING:

Faculty Senate Presiding Officer Gina Greco has asked that the attached Faculty Senate Resolution regarding the University Strategic Plan be shared with the full Board as part of her report to the Board. Professor Greco will be at the Board meeting and intends to discuss this resolution.

The Strategic Plan Development Team considered these comments from the Faculty Senate and made changes to the Strategic Plan to address some of the comments. The Plan before the Board for approval already includes those revisions.
MOTION: Faculty Senate Resolution in Response to the Strategic Plan
November 30, 2015

Whereas the Faculty Senate is committed to the future of Portland State University;

Whereas the Faculty Senate has pledged “to operate in a strategic fashion to address institution-wide issues as a working partner with the administration in shared governance”;

Whereas the President of the university and Presiding Officer of the Senate agreed that the Faculty Senate would review and respond to the Strategic Plan before it is sent to the Board of Trustees;

After seeking a sense of the faculty at an open forum on October 26 and at a Senate meeting on November 2, and by inviting comments by email, we propose the following response:

FACULTY SENATE RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

In keeping with its responsibilities under the PSU Faculty Constitution for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter, methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life that relate to the education process, the Faculty Senate has reviewed the draft Strategic Plan.

The PSU Faculty Senate recognizes that the draft Strategic Plan is a work-in-progress. To move the University forward, the plan must establish a foundation for fruitful collaboration across a diverse community whose members differ in principles and priorities. The success of these next steps will require the Senate’s participation as a partner in shared governance to establish priorities that will guide our efforts and set benchmarks to mark our progress.

Therefore, the Faculty Senate resolves to coordinate its committees and current and future task forces with the aim of prioritizing the strategies which best serve PSU’s commitments to instruction, research, scholarship, outreach and service. Their work should be informed by best practices proven at other universities.

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Our report consists of three general comments that Faculty Senate has expressed to the Strategic Planning Committee, followed by more specific examples, listed goal by goal, of how Faculty Senate should be involved in implementation of the plan.

NOTE: The Strategic Planning Committee was invited and attended all meetings where these opinions were expressed so it is possible that their final draft has addressed some of the comments provided below.
General Comments:

- **Prioritize Academic Quality:** The Senate understands that the plan is designed to be a high level document; nonetheless, faculty raised issues about the lack of quality indicators. While senators recognize the difficulty in measuring quality, Faculty Senate maintains that the document should state explicitly that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to academic quality will be added to the current quantitative KPIs as the plan is implemented.

- **Disentangle Equity and Diversity:** Faculty members were pleased by the decision to apply an equity lens throughout the plan, but would like to see more clarity in goal 4. They specifically noted the slippage between the terms “equity” and “diversity” and asked that the two notions not be conflated. Celebrating diversity without addressing real structural problems of equity is counterproductive. The university should seize the opportunity to develop and implement practices that address equity, and Senate looks forward to participating in the elaboration of strategies to reach this goal.

- **Prioritize Global Education:** It was also noted that, while it is an important equity issue that we support scholarships so that economically disadvantaged students have the opportunity to “Broaden International Opportunities,” currently an initiative under goal 4, this topic deserves to be a goal in its own right. The five initiatives under goal 4 currently numbered 3.1-3.5 could fall under this new goal. Since these are all student-focused, Faculty Senate suggests adding a 6th initiative that is faculty-focused: Expand opportunities for faculty-led short-term study abroad programs, faculty research abroad and international research partnerships.

Proposed Senate Steps Toward Implementation:

**STRATEGIC GOAL #1: ELEVATE STUDENT SUCCESS**

- **Put Students First:** In allocation of financial resources, priority should be given to instructional services and student support. The Senate could lead creative thinking about how to prioritize investment in student success. For example, Senate could explore how to overcome such obstacles as PSU’s under-utilization of Summer Quarter to ensure that every student has offerings every summer that would help him or her advance through his or her degree requirements.

- **Clarify Academic Pathways:** Faculty Senate will continue the discussion planned for the January 20, 2016 Winter Symposium, “What does it mean to be educated in the 21st century?” The campus-wide conversation will study not only what it should mean to be a PSU graduate, but also how to best articulate outcomes so that students understand what we are asking of them and why. When the pedagogical goals of requirements are transparent, students are more confident academically and better able to succeed.

- **Use Best Practices to Advance Student Retention:** Success of this initiative will require a campus-wide solution and, to get there, we need action not only by the current Academic Advising Committee, but through a robust campus-wide conversation with all stakeholders. Such involvement would allow us to align advising with recent research on best practice for developmental advising.
STRATEGIC GOAL #2: ADVANCE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

- **Recognize and Develop Excellence in Teaching:** Senate members expressed support for this topic, as it supports Senate goals. For example, Faculty Senate Steering has on the November 30 agenda a motion to establish clear and consistent review of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (NTTF) that will lead to continuous appointments. The goal is to promote student learning, support best pedagogical practice and foster academic freedom. In addition, the Faculty Senate Steering Committee is working on a motion to explore the creation of teaching-intensive tenure positions.

- **Recognize Outstanding Scholarship:** Senate will explore the creation of a Distinguished Faculty rank that does not identify one specific type of scholarship. We are committed to recognizing PSU faculty who have achieved national and/or international stature as a result of their contributions to scholarship/creative activity, research, education and service, and whose work has been notably influential in their fields of specialization.

- **Prioritize for Impact:** After the Academic Program Prioritization Committee completes its Atlas of PSU Programs, the Faculty Senate will create a task force to analyze the data and identify academic programs most deserving of increased investment and development.

- **Key Performance Indicators:** Faculty Senate notes that the performance indicators for scholarly activity focus exclusively on sponsored research. We would like to see KPIs that track publications in peer-reviewed journals, academic presses, significant creative performances and activities.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3: EXTEND OUR LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Include Local and Global Communities:** Senators are interested in participating in implementation of this goal. In particular, many want to ensure that this emphasis, while a natural expansion of PSU’s hallmark successes in local and regional service, not result in a neglect of our obligation to prepare our students to participate fully in the global community.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4: EXPAND OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

This goal provoked the most discussion at the faculty forum and Senate meeting, so we hope that changes have already been made to the draft. The comments below indicate a strong desire among senators to be involved in implementation work on this goal:

- **Focus on Equity:** The Senate could participate in the identification of the campus inequities that must be ameliorated or eliminated. Next, the magnitude of these “gaps” or inequities can be measured and targets set to close these gaps.

- **Promote Equity Through the Curriculum:** A specific example of inequity given was the lack of support for a heritage language program in Spanish, which would provide courses in advanced grammar, reading and writing designed to meet the specific needs of those Latino/a students who have grown up speaking Spanish at home while going to school in English.

- **Evaluate Equity in Underrepresented Faculty Groups:** Given the importance of building and retaining faculty from underrepresented groups, the Senate suggests that the university begin
tracking not only the numbers of faculty from underrepresented groups, but in particular the retention rate of individuals from those groups.

STRATEGIC GOAL #5: INNOVATE FOR LONG-TERM STABILITY

- **Invest in Our Educational Mission:** Faculty Senate, through the Faculty Budget Committee, should be a part of these discussions to ensure that instructional support is prioritized in the budget and that our educational mission remains a guiding principle in budgetary and financial decisions.