

ACADEMIC PRIORITIES 2010-2013

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Introduction

What follows is a set of academic priorities that will guide our efforts over the next few years as we continue to improve academic quality, to more strongly assert The New School's academic profile, and to develop the kinds of planning, systems and structures that will support innovation and advancement. This is not intended to provide a comprehensive or detailed view of all aspects of our work, but to lay out the broad areas where there are the greatest needs and opportunities to make progress that will have the greatest impact.

These priorities are situated at a transitional period for the university, as we reflect and build upon a decade of progress under Bob Kerrey's presidency and position for the leadership of our next president, David Van Zandt. In this context, we have identified priorities that support both stability and momentum. We intend to build from recent progress, to advance critical work already underway, and to ensure a stable, strong, and dynamically poised academic environment. These priorities are intended to inform and facilitate President Van Zandt's more extensive strategic plan for the university, and we recognize that these priorities may shift as that strategic plan emerges in the coming years.

The process for establishing our priorities began in the fall of 2009 and our thinking has been shaped by many conversations with faculty, deans, administrators, students, and Trustees, as well as through close attention to the changing context for higher education in the U.S. and in the world and the ways in which student needs and interests are evolving. Our priorities have also been shaped by looking both retrospectively and ahead. We seek to both catalyze the ideas that have been part of many discussions over the years and undertake basic structural work to make the university both more dynamic and coherent, while remaining adaptable to future directions.

Context: A decade of transformation under the leadership of President Kerrey.

The university has transformed over the past decade under Bob Kerrey's leadership. Among the most important changes were the commitments to make undergraduate education a priority, to invest in building the full-time faculty, and to adopt extended employment and tenure for our full-time faculty. All three of these developments were an essential part of building a more solid academic and financial foundation for our graduate programs. All three have also lead to a dramatic increase in the types and quality of services provided to our undergraduate students, including housing, health care, and career services.

In the early part of this new century, evolving academic opportunities as well as economic considerations led us to re-examine the "holding company" model of the university. Bob Kerrey envisioned and led the re-branding of the university and the centralization of many of the administrative functions previously performed by the divisions.

Another important change has been the acceleration of the movement from offering non-credit courses to offering for-credit and degree programs. In 2009, for the first time in The New School's history, the number of students enrolled in for-credit courses exceeded those enrolled in non-credit courses. The University's investment in online education has been another significant shift. After a number of years of inconsistent performance, The New School's online efforts were stabilized and have enjoyed steady growth in quality and quantity. While there remains much opportunity to bring our creativity and values to this effort, we are much better positioned to do so today than we were even four years ago.

Very significantly, President Kerrey has advanced a vision for a new University Center that will create new spaces for teaching and learning and provide a very real anchor to our academic community. And he has engendered the generosity of our donor community in support of this bold project.

With the support of President Kerrey, since 2009 we have dramatically increased the capacity of the Provost's Office to enable stronger academic planning. We have made significant inroads to develop and support our faculty, including programs to support research and an effort to assess our salary structure. We have worked closely with faculty to continue the development of a stronger and more coherent academic structure. With the deans council we have identified a broad range of new programs for development over the next several years, and we have prioritized faculty hires to align with these new programs as well as with enrollment trends. We completed Faculty Handbook revisions to strengthen promotion and review processes, and we have begun the Workload section. We established a university-wide curriculum committee that is actively addressing cross-divisional issues and opportunities in teaching and learning. All of this progress relates to the priorities we have identified for 2010 and beyond.

Guiding Principles

A number of values and principles have informed our priorities. Primary among these is a belief that university goals should both reflect and respond to divisional priorities. We will continue to develop unifying themes while trying to avoid an overly conformist approach that stifles the particular and the idiosyncratic – the things that give so much texture and distinctiveness to this university. We aim to facilitate and ensure and raise quality but within the terms of our diverse academic agendas and the need for societal relevance.

Our commitment to excellence will inform our approaches to meet ambitious enrollment goals and our responsibility to achieve a strong and sustainable business model. This is especially important given that we are a tuition driven institution with aspirations to compete with the universities, schools and colleges that have far greater resources (and often without the high costs of being located in New York City). We need to more assertively anticipate changes in the educational 'marketplace' and the various economic, demographic, and cultural factors that are creating these shifts. Doing so will require a high degree of collaboration among the divisions and academic and administrative offices and a fundamental commitment to our students and faculty.

Finally, it is important to embrace both innovation and legacy, especially given that innovation *is* our legacy. We want to assertively increase the academic excellence of the university through innovative new programs and initiatives while also affirming a commitment to successful programs that have been at the core of The New School and its divisions. Indeed the new initiatives grow directly out of these historic strengths, either in fact or in spirit.

With my colleagues in the Office of the Provost, I look forward to leading and facilitating this work and lending practical support and resources to help us realize our academic goals. Our role takes varying forms: In some instances we recognize the need to take some initiating action; in other areas our work is to coordinate and integrate; and in other cases it is a matter of providing institutional support to enable an effort to go the last mile. We look forward to the collaboration ahead and we are grateful to the Trustees and the many members of our community who continually shape and inform and support our efforts.

Tim Marshall, Provost
November 2010

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

The New School has an opportunity to build on its strong history and culture of innovation in quality curriculum and learning. Realignment of divisional structures and the building of new programs are underway to complement current offerings. Faculty, deans and students are either proposing or expressing interest in cross-divisional collaborations and university-wide programs to open new curricular pathways and create new learning experiences.

Collectively, our priorities reassert commitments to the quality of learning experiences at The New School and to enhancing existing strengths. They also seek to support and expand emergent practices that are innovative and responsive to our university's unique educational assets and potential. Our goals are to facilitate means for faculty and students to collaborate on curriculum planning and pedagogical design across divisions and programs; encourage program areas to identify resources and strengths that they can bring to the collaborative efforts of the whole; provide feedback and assessment opportunities regarding student learning outcomes; and refine planning processes and establish infrastructure and incentives for innovative approaches to curriculum and learning. Through these objectives, we will widen opportunities for faculty and students to explore emergent ways of knowing and creatively respond to new forms of knowledge and the practices that they inaugurate.

1. **Advance new programs** that complement current strengths, represent new curricular niches or innovative approaches to learning that are appropriate for New School students, and support strategic growth of the university. Priority areas include undergraduate BA programs, graduate design programs, and programs that create new undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts and the professions in ways that extend current strengths at the graduate level to the undergraduate level.
2. Create an **innovative new undergraduate framework** that focuses on preparing students to work on multi-disciplinary, problem-solving teams within the increasingly complex professional contexts of the 21st Century. Discussions will focus on recommending ways a new undergraduate framework might interrelate with the experiences of students across programs and levels and recommending an implementation plan for how various pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning within this new framework (e.g., large lectures, small seminars, projects, studios, study abroad) can be scaled appropriately and made congruent with realities of economics and resources.
3. Expand **online learning opportunities**. Develop plans for creating new and promoting existing hybrid online/onsite learning experiences that integrate social media and advance aspirations for distributed education. Work with the Engine project to articulate academic aspirations for online learning and distributed education that also assesses and aligns them with fiscal considerations. Review Blackboard as a learning management system and recommend criteria for arriving at the next iterations of online curricula and learning environments at The New School.
4. **Tap synergies across divisions** and between undergraduate and graduate programs. Recommend ways to develop and maximize emerging curricular and informal learning opportunities at the intersections of design, management, policy, media, social science, and performing arts. Re-think and reinvigorate the values and opportunities for integrating the arts across the university.

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY (continued)

5. Inaugurate discussions about the possibility of designing and implementing a **shared undergraduate learning experience**. Consider creating such an experience around a set of foundational competencies relevant to new problems of the 21st century and challenges facing students in the future--for example: qualitative and quantitative approaches to observation, documentation and interpretation of observations, visualization of knowledge constructed, and performance/presentation of new knowledge and insight.
6. Introduce university wide a regular seven-year program of **external program reviews** to ensure ongoing quality improvements and educational relevancy of New School degrees.
7. Articulate our aspirations for the future of **Continuing Education**.
8. Expand program opportunities that anticipate and meet the needs of **Career Changing** students.
9. Expand **graduate programs**, including PhDs. Design graduate degrees and graduate degrees in humanities are priority areas for development.
10. Assess and develop strategies to **internationalize curricular content and pedagogies**, including undergraduate study abroad experiences and international field study internships for graduate students.
11. Develop the capacity to undertake ongoing research into all degree programs so that we can better understand how a New School education is preparing students for **careers and lifelong learning**.

FACULTY

The faculty is the principal resource for the achievement of all the academic aspirations articulated in this plan. No investment is more important to enabling and supporting the ambitious goals for academic excellence, reputation, and fiscal stability than increasing the quality, size, and diversity of the faculty. Academic innovation, growth and fiscal stability rely on the talent, industry and retention of a committed and engaged faculty.

As The New School seizes the interdisciplinary and interdivisional opportunities that are increasingly necessary to meet contemporary educational challenges, we will need to recruit, support and engage faculty across the university in innovative teaching, research and programming. These goals require incentives, rewards, and support for faculty scholarship and professional development that can promote and grow excellence in teaching, advance knowledge, and improve problem solving in a complex world. Further, faculty policies that encourage academic entrepreneurship across the university will ensure continual renewal of innovative programming.

Faculty must have the resources they need to be successful, be held to high standards of performance and be rewarded for their contributions to our collective success. A new university-wide committee for Faculty Affairs has been formed to problem-solve and propose and review new policies, practices and processes to support our ambitions. The goals outlined below will ensure that the university can attract and keep a world-class faculty.

1. Strengthen **faculty recruitment and retention** practices. This work will include formalizing policies and supporting program heads and search committees to utilize best practices in recruitment, with an emphasis on ensuring the highest quality and most diverse candidate pools. The development of faculty annual review policies to provide quality feedback and support, including mentors, will help us retain exceptional faculty.
2. Continue to refine the **Faculty Handbook**. In 2010-11 the work will focus on workload and the creation of divisional policies as well as implementing the Handbook revisions developed in 2009-10 related to employment categories and promotion and review processes.
3. Enhance support for **faculty development**, including research and innovation in teaching and pedagogy. We plan to extend the 2010 Faculty Research Support Initiative by increasing funding for student assistants to complement baseline research support. Additionally, the newly hired director of research in the Provost's Office will support the development of applications for external research funding. We will also consider ways to recognize and reward interdisciplinary teaching, new program development, and innovative research and creative practice that leads to new approaches to teaching and learning.
4. Work with Human Resources to complete a **faculty salary benchmarking study** and develop proposals to address salary equities university-wide.
5. Develop a **faculty growth plan** that will include a system for determining and planning optimal ratios of part-time and full-time faculty as well as tenured and term faculty in each division based on academic needs and desired growth.

STUDENT ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Our students seek a broad spectrum of educational experiences, disciplinary and interdisciplinary, undergraduate and graduate degree programs or continuing education, studying on campus, on line or in hybrid programs. They study in studios, practice rooms, lecture halls, seminar classes often engaged with the world around them. This plan aims to support student academic life in terms of physical space, expanded academic resources and services, and the improvement of administrative infrastructure to support academic goals, reducing bureaucratic obstacles.

1. Improve **administrative systems to support interdisciplinary and cross-divisional work**. Align credit structure and class schedule times. Review room-scheduling procedures.
2. Expand the current **University Writing Center** to become a more comprehensive learning support center that will include math tutoring and services to address the needs of graduate students, ESL students, and students with learning disabilities.
3. Enhance and coordinate **academic advising** across the university. Streamline administrative processes for dual degree and BAFA students in order to facilitate fluid movement across divisions and degree programs. Support the implementation of an online degree audit program that will help students plan their academic programs and work to make current course information more readily usable and available to students.
4. Strengthen and expand services for **career services, internships, study abroad, and civic engagement** across all divisions and programs.
5. Increase **student spaces for study, collaboration, and social interaction**. Priority projects include the completion of the student study space at 90 Fifth Avenue and the refinement of plans for student space in the University Center.
6. Expand **teaching, research, and field opportunities and for graduate students**.
7. Improve support for **international students** by connecting the Office of International Students Services to ongoing and planned academic efforts and academic support structures.

EXTENDED CAMPUS

The New School has rich opportunities to extend its campus through a distributed education model that embraces both on-site and on-line opportunities. The New School has always had an international scope that has been shaped in large part by its location in New York City. The founding of the University in Exile, the addition of Parsons, and the merger with Mannes has greatly added to The New School's international character. Understanding and connecting to the world is core to our values as a higher education institution committed to social justice and global citizenship. This is particularly true given that we are situated in the world's most multicultural city.

Virtually all of our academic units now include international partnerships and programs, most conspicuously in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Most striking, we have the highest proportion of international undergraduate students of any university in the nation. We are committed to growing and deepening our international commitments, collaborations, and opportunities for students and faculty. Through better coordination and focus of existing work and new activities, we intend to increase study abroad options, international internships, and institutional partnerships around the world. The launch of the Global Studies BA program is the latest in a range of efforts to bring global knowledge into our curriculum. We intend to partner with institutions around the world, creating innovative distributed learning opportunities. We want to provide possibilities for our faculty to work with international colleagues to develop models for students -- both at the New School and those based outside the New York City campus -- to ensure that they receive an education that reflects the reality of increasingly global careers and lives.

1. Establish strategic priorities for **major global institutional partnerships**, especially in Asia and Europe, based on a networked model of flows of knowledge between various sites.
2. Improve coordination and support for **international engagement university-wide**. Clarify the university and divisional staffing structure, and establish effective communication networks and advisory bodies.
3. Diversify and expand **international student recruitment efforts**. Develop a global strategy for growing and diversifying interest in The New School from international students.
4. Develop a clear strategy for expanding **online programs and hybrid on-site/on-line** programs.
5. Identify and support a person in the provost office to lead a **university-wide discussion about strategic focus and opportunities** that build on the comparative advantages of The New School in the global higher education market.

RESEARCH

The phrase “Social Research” appears in the original name of The New School. While now it is part of the name of our graduate school in the liberal arts, knowledge production for social benefit and use, and connecting that production to our teaching, is a university-wide mission. The introduction of university-wide promotion policies and research support programs reflects the fact that our research mission has taken on heightened importance and now requires more focused and dedicated support. Through their scholarship, our faculty are already having major impact on their academic fields and on the world. A key goal is to create an enabling environment that incentivizes and rewards increased research activity and high impact research that can attract higher levels of external funding. We want to do this broadly, in all the fields in which our faculty work, but particularly in areas where the research extends across disciplines and divisions and enhances institutional strengths.

In emergent cross-disciplinary fields, we need to develop spaces in which junior faculty can find mentorship and intellectual community when their research interests cannot be encompassed by the expectations of any one department or program. It is important to note that the term Research, while referring specifically to the array of knowledge producing ideas and practices that the term typically connotes, is also shorthand for the wide range of impactful scholarly work that faculty at The New School conduct – especially professional and creative practice. The goals below include these multiple forms of scholarship.

1. Extend and enhance internal sources of **funding for faculty research** including baseline research support, access to student assistants, and the competitive application processes for project support.
2. Provide systematic **support for research development and external research funding** through a dedicated director of research support in the Provost Office, in collaboration with the university’s Development Office.
3. Create a **grants administration process** to streamline implementation of and reporting on research grants.
4. Develop a formula for **sharing indirect costs** on grants that incentivize research while supporting the overhead costs of the university that enable research.
5. Pilot “**research incubators**” in a few key topical areas that create communities of faculty (and students) across fields and schools in order to promote innovation and mentoring in interdisciplinary areas.
6. Support and coordinate the work of **centers and institutes** around the university to help them reach their potential as sites of collaborative research and shapers of public debate.
7. **Increase and achieve greater balance of PhD opportunities** across divisions and programs and improve PhD student funding support.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

We intend to create community discussion around our institutional commitment to social justice and apply these commitments to our academic work, operationalizing our foundational values in the contemporary context. A concern for social justice, a broader understanding of issues related to diversity, is central to how much of the New School community sees itself. This impulse can be traced to the origins of some of our schools – providing access to higher education for working people, serving as a haven for scholars at risk, working on policies promoting equity and democratic governance, and contributing to public discourse through critical reflection.

Critical to our social justice commitment is how we organize and govern ourselves by encouraging open debate and diverse voices, living up to our ideals in our own backyard. We are committed to increasing the numbers of students and faculty from diverse backgrounds into our community, and to constantly attend to the diverse needs and interests of our students in terms of our programs and our institutional culture. We know we need to strengthen scholarship opportunities for underserved sectors of the population; to develop effective recruitment and retention strategies; and to ensure that The New School is a welcoming and supportive community for all students.

There has been real effort and progress at the divisional level, and a task force submitted a preliminary report in fall 2009 that will help inform our strategies. We need a planning effort to link, elevate, focus, and put appropriate resources behind these efforts and ideas so that Social Justice becomes fully a university-wide initiative.

1. Lead and support the new Social Justice Committee in its immediate work to **assess needs and recommend priority issues and strategies**.
2. **Establish institutional leadership for Social Justice** to ensure dedicated expertise, advocacy, and coordination at the University level.
3. **Increase the numbers of under-represented minorities in the student body**.
4. **Increase the numbers of under-represented minorities in the faculty**.
5. Institute an ongoing program of **faculty, staff, and student development workshops** on aspects of social justice.
6. Ensure an **inclusive and safe university community for LGBTQI and ALANA students** and encourage teaching practices that embody this inclusiveness in the classroom.

ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY

The academic aspirations that drive this academic plan rely on promoting curricular and program innovation, excellence in scholarship or creative practice and the creation of intellectual and learning communities across disciplines, New School divisions and the world. Returning to our roots as an educational innovator, The New School must not only embrace the paradigm shift in how knowledge is collected, analyzed, understood, and manifested. We must strengthen the core resource and advance the use of technology to support academic aims. Rapidly changing teaching methodologies, communication mechanisms, social media and content dissemination necessitates a rethinking of the role, use and promotion of both traditional and electronic library resources and academic technologies in advancing our aspirations.

Appropriate academic resources are fundamental to building and supporting an exceptional faculty. Likewise, academic technology is fundamental to the planning for virtually all of the goals articulated in this plan. Through the life of this plan we hope to have answered the critical questions of how the university can advance our academic goals through the investment in, promotion of and experimentation with technology. We see the current period as an intense planning effort to examine our critical needs, assess the appropriate administrative means to advance our goals and identify priority investments with a timetable for their implementation.

1. Assess and propose **improvements for academic technology** that will set The New School in a strong and strategic position to respond to evolving trends in higher education. Challenges relate to curricular offerings and pedagogical approaches; research; collection, evaluation and use of information, and communication and collaboration across the university and among the NYC and international sites of The New School. Propose improvements to the administrative arrangements for academic technology planning and investment including mechanisms or standing committees to assess means for continue adaptation to rapidly changing needs. Explore and recommend approaches to learning online and with social media that are capable of generating new streams of revenue because of their curricular and pedagogical excellence.
2. Assess the adequacy of the current **print and electronic library collections** to support the curricular and research needs of faculty and students. We will improve our search tools to provide better access to the content of the collections and explore ways to enhance library services, including new models for reference and instruction. We will continue our work on plans to provide better physical library space.

ACADEMIC PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Over the next three years we will continue to build on the progress we have made to improve our academic planning and operations. These improvements will help continue to transform The New School from a loose aggregation of divisions bound together largely for financial reasons into a distinctive university with inter-divisional and interdisciplinary ties and clear pathways for students and faculty to explore and build inter-woven programs. The intention is to regularize operations, keeping in mind our goals to value and support existing strengths, to create incentives for programmatic innovation that responds to academic imperatives and/or fiscal exigencies, and to build a complement of offerings that supports key programs and that broadens the range of prospective students. Much progress on this front has been made in the last year and our work is ongoing.

1. Implement new and more **transparent budget policies and processes**. These policies would provide common information to allow decision-makers to prioritize allocations based on shared knowledge. They will allow the academic leadership to allocate resources strategically in support of academic goals, with guiding financial principles to support programmatic innovation and efforts to strengthen and enhance The New School's academic profile.
2. Develop an **integrated academic planning calendar** that links the academic priorities with board deadlines, planning processes, decision points related new program development, faculty hiring, capital and space needs, enrollment management, and financial allocations.
3. Integrate the **university and divisional academic plans** and use them to guide decisions related to academic development, faculty hiring, capital and space needs, enrollment management, and financial allocations.
4. Optimize the **divisional structures** to support academic goals and to pursue shared administrative support.
5. Clarify the **roles and responsibilities of the academic leadership**, including the provost, deans/executive deans, deans of schools, directors/chairs of programs, with regard to general responsibilities, decision-making, and specifying how these positions relate to each other within a division and to peers across the university.
6. Expand our use of **evidence-based decision-making**, including research and analysis of the costs and relative outcomes of various types of investment.