TO: Dr. Kimberly Kostelis, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
FROM: Dr. Lisa Frank, Interim Dean, School of Business
DATE: October 11, 2023
SUBJECT: Academic Program Planning Report

During the past six weeks the School of Business participated in meetings designed to inform the academic program planning process. Discussions occurred at the initial school-wide meeting on September 22nd, and within each of the departments at department meetings. Recommendations were made in consideration of multiple sources of information, including enrollment data, schedules, data found on the OIRA website, DFW data, and Power BI Link data.

Four additional documents informed the academic program planning process in the School of Business. First, the School of Business Strategic Plan, developed in alignment with the Central Connecticut State University Strategic Plan 2030, the 2020 AACSB Accreditation Standards, and the Governor's Workforce Strategic Plan. The plan was created in consultation with key stakeholders including students, alumni, faculty, staff, and business partners, ratified in 2021, and further refined in Spring 2023. Second, the school created a Societal Impact plan, ratified in spring 2023. In addition, during that same semester, the department chairs in collaboration with faculty in their department provided the dean's office with a set of goals specifically for their departments. These goals were consulted in creating the below set of recommendations for this report. Finally, the School of Business received a draft letter from the AACSB peer review team that, although not yet publicly available, serves to provide recommendations from peers with the goal of continuous improvement toward our accreditation renewal within the next five years. These recommendations were considered in determining the priority of recommended actions as summarized, below.

1. **Create a Pre-MBA Certificate Program to Increase Access to the MBA for Career Changers.**

The **Pre-MBA Certificate** is proposed to serve individuals who have completed a bachelor's degree in an area other than business who wish to pursue an MBA, or for those who would like to upskill or revise their skillset to one that contains business acumen and business principles taught in the business disciplines. The certificate would serve to meet the 27 credits of pre-requisites to the MBA that is normally required of a student with no business background. At present, the students are advised to take undergraduate classes, yet are admitted to the graduate programs and thus pay graduate fees for these prerequisites, while attending classes filled with mostly undergraduates. Furthermore, 27 credits can extend the time to complete the MBA by upwards of two years depending on whether a student is enrolled part-time or full-time. This can be disincentivizing for students who have many years of work experience and would like to dive into the MBA program. The proposed Pre-MBA Certificate will reduce the total number of credits needed as a pre-requisite to the MBA, and ideally be available fully online. Ultimately a Pre-MBA Certificate program will reduce expenses and time for students wishing to enter the MBA program, improve satisfaction levels of these students, and provide a stackable certificate that can be layered with stackable graduate certificates to complete the MBA.

2. **Collect and Report on Academic Program Quality and Post-Graduation Success.**

As a result of our AACSB Continuous Improvement Review, the Peer Review Team presented us with a draft report with recommendations for focus areas for the coming five years, which includes collection of data to report on post-graduation success. This recommendation is aligned with the 2020 AACSB Accreditation Standards which states that "Standard 6.2 Post-graduation success is consistent with the school's mission, strategies, and expected outcomes. Public disclosure of academic program quality supporting learner progression and post-graduation success occurs on a current and consistent basis." While success may be defined in a variety of outcomes based on traditional employment in a business field, the peer-review team specifically recommended **collection and dissemination of placement rates**. Neither the School of Business nor the university currently captures this information at the school level. The benefits to creating a process for collecting this data and a method for publicly disseminating this information are many:

- Documentation of the overall quality of our programs serves to improve enrollment and retention.
- Collection of this data enables us to benchmark against similar institutions for the purpose of continuous improvement.
- Analysis of this data enables us to plan initiatives for progressing and improving results.
- Communication of this data with our alumni can create opportunities for engagement and potential for financial support of our mission, vision, and programs.
- Publication of this data allows us to demonstrate the difference or value added the school makes in a learner's educational transformation, improving enrollment and retention outcomes.
- Publicity around higher education and questions about its relevance demands that we show how we are making a difference in students' lives well beyond offering a targeted curriculum.
- This data can be helpful to the university community beyond the school and provide evidence of value added to NECHE.

3. **Improve Completion Rates for School of Business Students through Curricular Advancements.**

We propose piloting a course that teaches both **STAT 200 and STAT 201 within the School of Business with one BUS course** (e.g., BUS 200), with a pre-requisite of Math 099 or equivalent, similar to the MATH 1200 – Statistics I course offered by the CT State Community College. This curricular change would achieve numerous beneficial outcomes for the university and CCSU students:

- BUS 200 will improve DFW rates because it will be designed specifically for business students, and free up the STAT classes to focus efforts on students in other disciplines. This will improve graduation rates, reduce time to degree completion, and improve student satisfaction and success in all departments.
- The CT State Community College currently offers a single course (MATH 1200 – Statistics I) that covers the content from both STAT 200 and STAT 201 that is needed for the business programs. Introducing BUS 200 to the curriculum will allow students to transfer credit for this class from the CT State Community College to CCSU and apply that credit to the business programs.
- Creating BUS 200 frees business students to take an additional elective, adding an opportunity for improving workforce development with additional general education or a focus on targeted business education.
- Directing this course specifically to business student needs increases applicability to the business workforce, further supporting workforce development.
- Creating a pilot in which one course takes the place of two courses will serve to improve student perceptions and satisfaction, reduce DFW rates, and reduce costs.
- This pilot course will be offered as a pre-requisite to BUS 250, Introduction to Business Analytics and Skills, and designed to set students up for success in BUS 250. Business 250 was created in response to workforce needs.

Additional recommendations for curricular advancement include:

- Consider creating a stackable certificate model for general education outcomes.
- Increase access to online, hyflex, and hybrid classes, especially specific to the MBA tracks.
- Offer the MBA in a fully online modality to compete with other AACSB accredited programs.

- Create a weekend cohort model for the MBA.
- Create truly stackable graduate programs, creating multiple certificate programs that layer into the full MBA or MSA degree.
- Develop undergraduate certificates that stack into the degree programs, while ensuring prerequisites do not bottleneck career changers and first-time students.
- Collaborate with departments across campus to map BS + Business minor programs into the Accelerated pathway to the MBA.
- Propose an MS Finance degree program.
- Propose OCP in Financial Analytics.
- Stay relevant with employer needs by increasing Fintech in the curriculum.
- Review and eliminate unnecessary pre-requisites and consider elimination of the School of Business "pre-major requirement" rule that prevents students from taking upper-division courses.
- Conduct a thorough review of curriculum to ensure efficiencies in operations (overrides, e.g.)
- Reduce class sizes.
- Increase student and faculty understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, and improve awareness in the classroom.

4. **Increase Student Support and Engagement (Co-curricular).**

Faculty, staff, and departments agreed that increasing student supports, and co-curricular engagement serve to improve retention, enrollment, and in some cases add to revenues. Recommendations include:

- **Career Accelerator Program**:
  - Prepare our students for a successful career by successfully implementing the Career Accelerator Program in the School of Business and extend it university-wide. Capture metrics to show its impact on student success for publishing.
- **Mentoring Program: Graduate Students as Mentors, Undergraduate Students as Mentees**:
  - The mission of the School of Business Mentoring Program is to enrich and support the professional, academic, and personal experiences of undergraduate students by intentionally pairing them with School of Business MBA/MS students. The mentoring relationships will assist undergraduate students in the transition from academic to professional life and support individual success at CCSU and beyond.
  - The goal of the School of Business Mentorship Program is to engage our undergraduate students in meaningful relationships with well-established MBA/MS students who could help them transition effectively from school to work and in their career development.
  - Objective: To foster mentor/mentee relationships among students and encourages them to develop leadership and networking skills. Woven into the current School of Business strategic plan (Goal 2, Community Engagement), undergraduate students will be matched with knowledgeable, and experienced mentors who becomes their professional colleague.
- Increase opportunities for students to engage more on campus, through activities, events, faculty and student social events, and clubs and find ways to motivate them to attend. Recently students are not motivated solely by extra-credit. Create a survey or establish focus groups to capture student interest in activities, and what might motivate their attendance at co-curricular events. Ensure focus groups reflect the diversity of our students.
- Create a mentoring program for upperclassmen to mentor lowerclassmen.
- Secure foundation funds to reimburse students who achieve co-curricular certifications that contribute to workforce development and improve their position in the job market (e.g., Excel).
- Increase student participation in professional organizations.
- Encourage, incentivize, and support experiential learning.
- Improve advising training with faculty and advisors to ensure awareness of requirements and connection with industry.

- Student feedback is to bring back PINs (anecdotally from chairs, advisors, and the students who visited with the AACSB peer-review team). PINs ensure appropriate advising occurs to enable students to be successful.
- Host conferences on campus, utilizing student housing over the summer months.

5. **Increase Fundraising through Dedicated Partnership with Institutional Advancement.**

As a result of our AACSB Continuous Improvement Review, the Peer Review Team presented us with a draft report that contains recommendations for our focus areas for the coming five years. This report specifically calls for a **representative of Institutional Advancement dedicated to the School of Business**. With a dedicated partner from Institutional Advancement, the school will have greater impact through:
- Generating revenue through naming the school and dedicated spaces in the school such as the analytics labs.
- Increasing opportunities for faculty and students to network with external stakeholders, employers, and alumni.
- Improving access to regional employers to identify opportunities for experiential learning and employment of students.
- A dedicated partner in Institutional Advancement can provide coordination, guidance, and support with developing external relationships.
- Partnering with Institutional Advancement opens the doorway to promoting programs that might serve specific employers.
- A partner in Institutional Advancement provides opportunities to secure supplemental funding to enable the school to rapidly progress on strategic initiatives, promote faculty development to ensure we are meeting the changing needs of the workforce, and increase efforts to support students toward their success.

Additional fundraising recommendations include:
- Renting campus spaces to generate additional revenue.
- In collaboration with Institutional Advancement, and Marketing and Communications, creating a consulting arm of the School of Business and other schools that provide and charge for consulting services, assisting employers with solving modern problems.
- Securing 'grants' from employers in return for solving their business problems.

6. **Expand High School Recruitment and Outreach.**

Faculty and staff recognize the opportunity provided by creating stronger connections with area high schools. Recommendations in this area include:
- Outreach to area high schools to create **dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment** agreements to increase the number of high school students with CCSU college credit.
- Increase engagement with area high schools, offering guest speakers to promote CCSU.
- Create a faculty day for the purpose of presenting to high schools.
- Connecticut requires all high schools to **offer financial literacy** to their students. This offers an opportunity to collaborate with high schools to qualify high school instructors to teach FIN 210 within the high school through a concurrent enrollment agreement, or have students attend CCSU to take the class for dual enrollment credit.