

## **Investment Focus 1: Faculty Excellence and Scholarly Distinction**

The academic reputation of Syracuse University, and the quality of the education we can offer to our students, is defined by the quality of our faculty and the distinction of their scholarship. We compete with the best universities in the nation for outstanding scholars, and our success in this competition is the key determinant of our academic improvement.

The most outstanding faculty members command high salaries and expect significant investment in the infrastructure required for their research. They also care deeply about the quality of the graduate students with whom they are engaged in scholarship, such as doctoral students in the sciences and M.F.A. candidates in the arts. In most disciplines there is intense competition for the highest-quality graduate students, but their presence is essential for the conduct of high-quality scholarship. The key factors in the competition for students are the reputation of the specific academic program, the presence of renowned faculty members in that program, and the magnitude of the stipend offered to the student.

Competition for outstanding faculty members and doctoral/professional students is expensive, but this investment is absolutely essential for academic improvement. New resources must be devoted to this purpose, so the fund for faculty excellence and scholarly distinction is a top priority of the campaign.

The investments made to enhance faculty and doctoral excellence must be strategic. Syracuse University must select a few areas of opportunity based on knowledge of current strengths, national trends, and potential leverage that may be gained from partnerships, existing external funding, and consortial cooperation. Criteria for the selection of academic opportunity areas include:

1. Intellectual richness and high potential for future impact
2. Opportunity potential—the greatest chance of making a real difference with the investment
3. Synergy inward—areas that enhance and have committed participation from multiple schools and colleges
4. Synergy outward—areas in which we can partner with our community and with other universities in our region, and areas that allow us to connect meaningfully in targeted locations nationally and in targeted global locations
5. Potential for attracting ongoing sponsored programs (federal, state, foundations, corporations) and other support

The grand segments of the University most likely to produce strategic investment opportunities are:

1. Technology and science
2. Human needs, social policy, and community and economic development
3. Public humanities, public communications, and the arts

An interdisciplinary project that has already been advanced using this model is the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems. New faculty members were hired to build our expertise in indoor environmental quality. Partnerships were formed with local companies and with other New York universities to broaden the scope of our capabilities and improve the relevance of the research to real-world engagement. An intensive marketing campaign, particularly through the efforts of SU's Government Relations team, has been extremely successful, with awards and commitments currently exceeding \$60 million. Faculty members from across the University are contributing to the Center of Excellence, and it is now recognized as one of the world's leading centers in its area of expertise.

A second example, in an earlier stage of development, is our interdisciplinary effort in disabilities studies. Building on traditional strengths in this area across several schools and colleges, substantial investments were made last year to add an extremely strong team with an internationally recognized leader. This year we are focused on consolidating efforts in research and in fund raising in order to build to a new level of recognition and excellence. This team is expected to take a position of pre-eminence in both the quality of their research and the impact of their activities on the lives of those with disabilities.

Across the campus there are conversations and planning activities that will generate the new interdisciplinary projects to be advanced in the years to come.

Illustrative examples of the expected opportunities include the following:

- In the area of information, SU has capabilities in information assurance, information fusion, information management, and information policy across several schools and colleges. The University has numerous past accomplishments in this area, and there is an ongoing campus-wide conversation to develop a unique Syracuse signature that can be advanced as a major initiative.
- In the area of the natural environment and environmental policy, we have distinguished scholars in several schools and colleges who are engaged in conversations about new initiatives and new curricula that will advance the University's capabilities and recognition.
- In global affairs, we have rich resources and recognized opportunities, in areas such as national security, counterterrorism and transnational citizenship.
- In the public humanities, arts and communications, there is an evolving project engaging, among other areas, questions of cultural and religious pluralism and indigenous populations.
- In the life sciences, there is a plan to advance the themes of cell signaling and biomedical engineering with a synergistic strategy.
- In the areas of art and design, there is a broad initiative to consider questions of the shrinking American city and its global counterparts.

Each of these thematic conversations is reaching out to take advantage of areas of excellence at Syracuse University, such as public communications, entrepreneurship, K-12 education, and others that can be enriching components of multiple projects. These are

only examples of potential areas. There is an open invitation for broad discussion of all areas of potential development, with emerging project proposals evaluated according to the criteria outlined above.

The interdisciplinary themes emerging now are the outgrowth of the ongoing success of the Academic Plan, and most are clearly within the investment areas (SPIRE areas) outlined in the Academic Plan. These themes are built on the strengths of our schools and colleges and have been developed in consonance with the academic plans and priorities developed by the academic deans. Indeed, many deans have already begun to align their academic programs and budgeting priorities with the areas identified here.

Once an academic area is selected for advancement, existing resources will be allocated to support it and new resources from the campaign will be invested to enhance faculty and doctoral excellence. Outstanding faculty members will be recruited by the multiple schools and colleges participating in the program, and the relevant doctoral/professional programs will be designed to concentrate on our selected focus. This concentration of resources and talent into a specific interdisciplinary program will give us a selective advantage in recruiting faculty members and doctoral and professional students with an interest in that program. The more we are able to amass talent in a particular program, the greater will be our potential to win increasing levels of sponsored programs and other support. The increased level of funding can be deployed to recruit additional doctoral/professional students, postdoctoral fellows, visiting faculty members, and other practitioners and professionals who will make vital contributions to the program without drawing funds from the University's budget.

As we develop and enhance each program, there will be outreach to potential partners for mutual benefit. The investments made to enhance our programs can devolve substantial benefit to the community and region, and our programs will be enriched by the diversity of participation and the depth of a broader pool of talent.

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