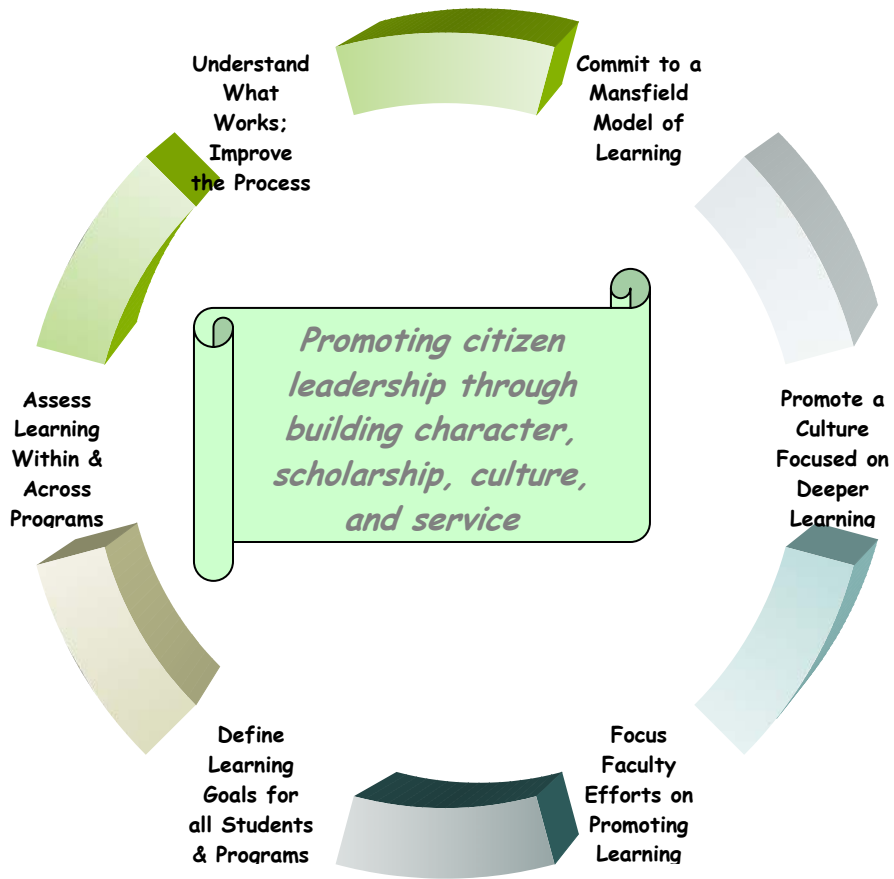


**BRINGING THE PIECES TOGETHER
TO
"MAKE LEARNING INESCAPABLE"**

*A Report from the
Mansfield University
Focus on Learning Forum
—Revised May 19, 2004—*



A PROPOSED MANSFIELD LEARNING MODEL

Our Vision for Learning: A campus deeply engaged with learning; an institution that promotes leadership through building character, scholarship, culture, and service; a university that dynamically transforms the lives of the students who come here.

The Context

As the only public university in north central Pennsylvania, we play a unique role in providing access to a college education for the citizens living in a large geographic area of the northern tier. We have demonstrated a strong commitment to providing personalized attention to our students as they engage college. The slogan “small university, big opportunities” represents Mansfield’s commitment to transform students’ lives as they become active learners and future leaders within their communities.

Over the past decade Mansfield has made substantial gains in its effectiveness as a comprehensive regional university. For example, we have improved our residential and instructional facilities; placed new technology in our classrooms, in student laboratories, and on faculty desktops; implemented new efforts to assess and demonstrate the effectiveness of our educational programs; introduced a range of on-line courses and programs; and revised our general education program. Our improvements have increased significantly our ability to attract new students and faculty and energized the campus community.

The Mansfield Plan: Strategic Goals and Actions---2003 and Beyond and our 2002 accreditation self-study reaffirm Mansfield University’s dedication to being a learning-centered institution. Mansfield also has a proud tradition of promoting student learning that is based on sound values and commitments—*Character, Scholarship, Culture, and Service*—on which we can build to move to the next level of institutional effectiveness.

Making such a commitment meaningful and successfully implementing the range of actions necessary to actively support learning is also accompanied by significant challenges, which we note below. We recognize that moving to a stronger engagement of Mansfield’s students in learning will require deeper reflection on all that we do and, ultimately, a transformational change in the character of our university. We also believe that it should be our mission to pursue this transformation.

We begin by recognizing our current context and the varied challenges we face. First, Mansfield is a public institution that serves a range of students in terms of age, experiences, and backgrounds. While our rural setting ensures a high proportion of students from smaller communities, we are also committed to promoting diversity and bringing together learners from metropolitan settings as well as various ethnic and racial backgrounds. Like a growing segment of students across the United States, a high proportion of Mansfield’s students enter college unprepared for higher education. And like the majority of public universities, a high proportion of our students lack a history of strong academic performance. Also, significant numbers of our students must be employed to financially support themselves or their families as they pursue their college

education. Moreover, aspects of the popular culture, students' family backgrounds, and even the campus environment, which provides an array of distractions at students' fingertips, also work in opposition to sustained engagement with learning. We must understand and rise to meet these challenges in our efforts to make Mansfield a learning-centered university that creatively engages its students with learning.

We begin our discussion with the assumption that the engagement of the campus community to promote deeper learning is within reach if we align our resources to achieve the goals suggested by our learning model. The model this document proposes offers a context for reflecting on what we do as well as a blueprint for the actions we must take if Mansfield is to become the effective learning-centered institution we desire.

This remainder of this document:

- (a) Describes a set of assumptions on which we must build,
- (b) Recommends the commitments we must make,
- (d) Describes specific elements of the model we propose, and
- (e) Identifies the action steps we must take to implement our model.

Assumptions and Commitments

- We will work within *The Mansfield Plan*, which emphasizes our focus on advancing student learning and defines the strategic goals and actions of the University.
- We will examine opportunities to promote learning within the full context of our students' lives, concurrent commitments, and personal histories, as well as the context of the university community and all of its associated activities and opportunities.
- Only when students, faculty, and staff have *longer term goals* and receive feedback on their progress in achieving goals will they be able to engage learning fully.
- It will require a powerful engagement of our campus community and a long-term commitment to collaboration to move Mansfield's focus on learning to the next level and achieve our vision.
- Promotion of student learning must be at the core of *everyone's* role at Mansfield, and we must be accountable to each other for our contributions to this process.
- Members of the campus community must *believe* and *act* as if student learning and development *is* our primary mission.
- Learning comes in many forms and in various settings. It is guided by self-assessment, reflection, goal setting, and pursuit of learning activities that promote goal attainment.
- High expectations for learning and the demonstration of active engagement in learning across the campus community will result in more effective learning outcomes.
- A community where *each member* is engaged in promoting deeper learning within the context of positive values as well as *self-reflection* on the varied activities designed to promote learning, will require energy and commitment.

- The collaborative engagement of students, faculty, staff, and visitors to the campus in continuously exploring and improving learning will be required to transform Mansfield into an institution that effectively pursues its vision for learning.
- All members of the campus community must strive to view themselves as leaders among peers, promoting character, scholarship, culture, and service in support of our vision for learning.
- All of our activities must be centered on our mission of promoting student learning. Only when we focus on our vision for learning and collaborate for this purpose will we be successful.
- We must engage students, faculty, and staff where they are as they enter our community and help move them to where we want them to be—fully engaged in the learning process.

A Mansfield Model: Components of Engagement for Learning

We have identified ten core components of a Mansfield model for learning. These components are consistent with our mission and vision and will enable us to advance learning to the next level. Moreover, these elements are consistent with the literature on promotion of learning in higher education (e.g., Chickering and Gamson, 1987; National Survey on Student Engagement, 2000; Tagg, 2003). The elements are summarized in the table below and then discussed in more detail.

TEN CORE COMPONENTS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR LEARNING AT MANSFIELD	
1.	<u>Build a campus culture focused on deeper learning.</u>
2.	<u>Recognize that meaningful and sustained learning is an active, goal driven, and deeply engaging process.</u>
3.	<u>Promote active learning and reflection among students across the full range of campus activities and curricula.</u>
4.	<u>Promote high quality and focused academic advising.</u>
5.	<u>Promote clear academic, personal, and career goals for students.</u>
6.	<u>Promote collaboration and cooperation among students around learning goals.</u>
7.	<u>Promote learning via high quality and frequent feedback to students.</u>
8.	<u>Promote emerging faculty roles as learners, leaders, mentors, and facilitators of deeper learning across the academic community.</u>
9.	<u>Encourage and enable academic programs to define and assess achievement of clear and cohesive learning outcomes that describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities required for success in a discipline.</u>
10.	<u>Encourage faculty engagement in communities of practice and learning.</u>

1. **Build a campus culture focused on deeper learning.** The orientation of new students, staff, and faculty must be carefully planned and skillfully implemented if we are to engage all incoming members of our campus with our vision for learning. Engagement with deeper learning is a goal that all current and new members of our community must promote with purpose.
2. **Recognize that meaningful and sustained learning is an active, goal driven, and deeply engaging process.** We must search for ways to move toward active learning paradigms that engage students. As we focus more on *learning*, we will begin to transform what individual students, faculty, and staff actually do.
3. **Promote active learning and reflection among students across the full range of campus activities and curricula,** including:
 - Recruitment and admissions process
 - Orientation to the University
 - Orientation to major programs of study
 - UNV 1100
 - First-year courses in which students are likely to enroll
 - Academic advising
 - Residence life programs
 - Programs in student organizations
 - Expectations that traditional-age students “join” the campus community and participate in a range of campus events that support their individual plans for learning and personal development
 - Expectations that nontraditional and working students find alternate avenues for engagement if geographic distance or other unalterable commitments prevent them from meeting the expectations for engagement on campus.
 - A consistent focus on student engagement via coursework across the academic curriculum.
4. **Promote high quality and focused academic advising.** Advising in conjunction with learning via the classroom and through special projects or experiences is at the core of student engagement and development. (Where large numbers of students present challenges for individual advising, special attention must be given to orientation and creative *group* engagement with academic, personal, and career planning.)
5. **Promote clear academic, personal, and career goals for students.** Clear personal and career goals encourage a longer time horizon for students who too often feel adrift during their college experience. It is important for advisors and instructors to help students identify short and long-term goals and to encourage the periodic review and revision of goals.
6. **Encourage collaboration and cooperation among students around learning goals.** Departments, individual faculty, and advisors should encourage and provide appropriate opportunities for student teamwork whenever these efforts do not conflict with academic integrity. Collaborative efforts often support deeper learning and exploration.

7. **Promote learning via high quality and frequent feedback to students.** “Feedback loops” that allow individual students as well as groups to measure their progress and effectiveness in constructive ways should be at the core of learning processes.
8. **Promote emerging faculty roles as learners, leaders, mentors, and facilitators of deeper learning across the academic community.** Collaboration and cooperation among faculty to promote scholarship in their disciplines and peer development will expand the repertoire of faculty behavior. Faculty reflecting on their roles, flexibly moving among different roles, and encouraging each other to focus on student learning will more powerfully assist students in clarifying and achieving their goals.
9. **Encourage programs to define clear and cohesive learning outcomes that describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities required for success in a discipline.** Expectations *across* a program or curricula will promote deeper learning. Clear learning outcomes also promote student goal alignment with program objectives. Clear outcomes also enable demonstration of program effectiveness and form the basis for program improvement over time.
10. **Encourage faculty engagement in communities of practice and learning at the program and university level.** Deeper faculty engagement and reflection will invigorate the learning experience across the campus community.

Action Steps Associated with the Mansfield Focus on Learning Model

For Students:

The following action steps apply to all Mansfield University students. At the same time we recognize that nontraditional and commuting students may have varying external community family expectations. We are committed to providing the flexibility to address personal and family needs as we help students select alternate means of engagement that are consistent with our goals. We welcome nontraditional and commuting student participation in developing reasonable alternatives that meet Mansfield’s goals for student engagement.

1. Continue to use, assess, and improve UNV 1100 as a means to promote student engagement, time management, and goal setting. Begin applying the Mansfield learning model in this course, which will serve as a vehicle for introducing and establishing many of the actions that follow.
2. Require each student to develop and periodically revise a Mansfield *Student Plan for Success* across their entire Mansfield experience.
3. Require each student to develop a *Time Management Plan* for which they are accountable throughout their first year. Use UNV 1100 and advising to encourage wise time management. Focus attention on helping students not over-commit their limited time resources either in campus activities or jobs.

4. Implement a ***First-year Student Study Program*** that provides improved opportunities for students to study on a regular basis. (Students should not be compelled to leave their residence hall to find a quiet location for study.) Student role models of engagement with study, quiet hours for study on Sunday/Monday through Thursday and after 1 a.m. on week nights, and tutorial support for first-year courses within residence halls during the evening hours would be features of this program. Create study “communities” with scheduled meeting times and locations (residence halls, library, classrooms, HUB) for all students.
5. Provide study-oriented residence floors with similar expectations to 4 above for students beyond the first year who desire learning-friendly academic living spaces.
6. Experiment with grouping students in residence halls by academic interests to promote peer mentoring and collaborative learning. Find incentives to encourage students who may be inclined to seek this kind of arrangement.
7. Undertake a ***First-semester Midterm Student Progress Assessment*** via advisement *before* the withdraw date. Build in “electronic triggers” (e.g., generate a list from an advising database) to identify for advisors students in trouble by the midterm of the first year.
8. Provide ***Support Programs*** for first-year students at risk, which includes elements such as peer advising, ADRL monitoring, tutor and SI support, that may be mandatory for weaker students or those showing signs of academic difficulty.
Note: Because of costs, we may need to find more creative ways to rely on current students who represent a positive role model and are volunteer peer advisors and mentors. We may also need to seek special grant support to build such programs.
9. Gradually fade intensive support scaffolding during the second and third years as students demonstrate success.
10. Move toward having more entering students engaged in First Year Interest Groups (FIGs), and assess the outcomes from FIG involvement.
11. Provide tailored alternatives to on-campus programs for nontraditional and commuting students via the ***Student Plan for Success*** and the ***Time Management Plan***. (Use UNV 1100 to build plans and have plans reviewed by advisors who should encourage and assist students in need of better planning.)
12. “Flag” high risk students during orientation or pre-orientation assessments and inform advisors (and perhaps UNV and FIG instructors) so that they can focus attention on the needs of these students.
13. Expect demonstration of civic engagement or community service by all students. (The American Democracy Project Committee and a related community advisory group are actively working on this expectation.)
14. Provide all students with the opportunity to build a ***Co-curricular Record of Leadership Contributions and Service***. (This approach could be linked with the success plan. A task group is currently working on strategies for promoting student leadership development as a central theme at Mansfield.)
15. Expect all students to participate in some integrative ***capstone experience*** as defined by their academic major. (This could be a professional or senior seminar, presentation, major paper or thesis, research project, internship with reflective

report, recital, art exhibit, or cumulative portfolio that students know they are working toward in their program of study.)

16. Expect all seniors to have a ***Senior Plan*** for their continuing development. Include career and civic engagement or leadership goals as part of this plan. Ideally, this could be part of a process that is continuous with their initial ***Student Plan for Success***. (The Career Services Office could help to facilitate this.)

For Faculty:

1. Promote the concept of faculty and staff as members of a *learning community* that is committed to self-reflection and continuous improvement.
2. “Expect” faculty to attend an orientation or faculty assembly focused on goals associated with the learning model during University Days.
3. Use faculty orientation to promote the learning model, focusing particularly on promoting a change in the learning culture for first year students. The goal is to move faculty toward “reading off the same page/script” in terms of promoting or expecting student engagement—“making learning inescapable.”
4. Encourage all faculty teaching courses frequented by first-year students to set and clearly communicate similar levels of expectations for learning, including an appropriate level of course difficulty and expected study commitments on the part of students.
5. Develop and implement a 2-year orientation to learning and support program for all new faculty.
6. “Expect” all faculty to join practice groups or communities tailored to their interests or needs. Examples of groups might include:
 - a. Effective on-line teaching
 - b. Promoting learning in large class sections
 - c. Using active learning strategies
 - d. Using technology to promote deeper learning (A CET initiative is underway for this purpose.)
 - e. Using more effectively writing to promote learning across our curriculum (A CET initiative is underway for this purpose.)
 - f. Strategies for engaging students in the classroom.
 - g. Strategies for engaging students out of the classroom.
7. Identify *faculty mentors* to convene monthly or more frequent meetings of practice groups focused on specific areas of need or interest in support of item 5 above.
8. Recognize engagement with practice groups, mentoring, and leadership roles in faculty tenure and promotion processes.
9. Implement more public faculty recognition awards that would encourage a strong commitment to the new Mansfield learning model.

For Staff:

1. Orient all present and new staff to the Mansfield learning model.
2. Expect that managers and department chairpersons will actively promote the Mansfield learning model and implementation plan.
3. Develop a collaborative faculty-student affairs forum or planning group that meets regularly to coordinate and encourage student learning outside the classroom.
4. Ensure that staff are included in communities of practice (6 under faculty above) where possible.
5. Implement more public staff recognition awards that would recognize demonstrated commitment to the new learning model and efforts to support and engage Mansfield students with learning.
6. Recognize that it takes a whole community to promote engagement and deeper learning.

Action Plan for Engaging Support of the Campus Community

- Continue the dialogue about a learning model at the **Learning Forum**, ensuring the emerging model and implementation plan is a good fit for Mansfield.
- Engage department chairs in the growing dialogue, and seek their support.
- Identify concerns about the model and plan; attend to the concerns.
- Use a town hall meeting to share the emerging concepts and action plans with the campus community.
- Encourage members of the **Learning Forum** to share and promote ongoing dialogue about the model and its implementation.
- Use the **Learning Forum** and CET web pages to showcase best practices at Mansfield.
- Invite external speakers and consultants to campus annually to promote best practices in teaching and learning.
- Assess the effectiveness of our implementation efforts.
- Celebrate successes and recognize members of the campus community who promote deeper learning.

Assessing Outcomes of a Mansfield Plan to Promote Learning

The members of the **Learning Forum** recognize the importance of assessing the effectiveness of the efforts associated with the proposed model. Assessment should allow us to make corrections when we take actions that are ineffective or unsuccessful and to identify practices that hold greater potential. We expect the efforts associated with this plan to evolve based on what we learn as we implement recommendations. Toward this end we recommend that the following outcomes be included in an assessment effort. As we move closer to implementation, we will need to clarify specific targets for these outcomes.

Our tentative outcomes include increased:

- Student satisfaction with learning and support for learning across the campus community
- Faculty satisfaction with student engagement/performance
- Student satisfaction with academic advising
- Clarity of program learning outcomes
- Number of programs with capstone experiences
- Quality of program assessment based student learning outcomes
- First to second year retention rate
- Graduation rate within 4 years/6 years
- Rate of graduate school attendance within 5 years of graduation
- Rate of job attainment in an appropriate (discipline-related) positions within 2 years of graduation
- Rate of alumni satisfaction with major programs
- Rate of alumni satisfaction with Mansfield University generally
- Rate of alumni giving over 5 years
- Rate of applications to Mansfield from better prepared students both within and outside the region traditionally served by the University.

Some ways of measuring these outcomes are already in place, for example the survey of our climate for teaching and learning that has been administered over the past 10 years, an advising survey, and alumni surveys administered by Mansfield University and the State System of Higher Education. In the future we intend to utilize nationally normed measures of student engagement with learning and a faculty measure of engagement. We will collaborate with the Assessment Committee to ensure that there are sufficient measures in place to assess our implementation of the proposed model. It is important to note that none of these measures is focused on individual performance, but on assessing changes in the university and its programs as a whole.

References and Resources

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- Tagg, J. (2003). *The Learning Paradigm College*. Boston: Anker Publishing.

Appendices

The following resources are available on-line or by request to the Learning Forum.

- Chickering and Gamson's [*Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*](#)
- McClenny's [*The Learning Centered Institution*](#)
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- NSSE [*Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice*](#)
- Tagg's [*Principles for Effective Learning*](#)

Tagg (2003) has focused attention on “learning paradigm colleges,” which he and others believe:

- Promote intrinsically rewarding goals
- Require frequent, continual, connected, and authentic student “performances”
- Provide consistent, continual, interactive feedback
- Provide a long time horizon for learning
- Create purposeful communities of practice
- Align all activities around the mission of producing student learning.