

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Tracy Stewart, Ph.D.
Interim Provost/Senior VPAA

DATE: October 3, 2025

SUBJECT: Provost Report for October 2025

Strategic Planning

The University Planning Committee (UPC) continues to build upon the work by its faculty, staff, administrative, and student members during the spring and summer 2025 to prepare the next University-wide strategic plan. The draft plan draws from community-wide input and analysis of emerging institutional enrollment and other priorities, together with robust discussion about emerging challenges and opportunities facing the University. The draft plan is more specific than prior strategic plans, outlining priorities and strategies in the areas of enrollment, learning and innovation, student success & retention, and organizational effectiveness. Across and within each of these areas, alignment with other institutional planning endeavors – strategic enrollment, financial, and other institutional sustainability efforts – are detailed. Following a preview with the Board of Trustees at its October meeting, the draft will be shared with members of the University community for review and feedback. In addition to discussions with various campus groups and committees, there will be several open fora and other ways for faculty, staff, and students to learn about the plan and share their input as the UPC continues to refine it through the fall semester. Feedback and suggestions about the draft plan, and the planning process, is always welcome by emailing planning@scranton.edu.

Middle States Accreditation

The University's Middle States self-study process is commencing. During the fall semester, Self-Study Steering Committee co-chairs Dr. Mike Jenkins and Dr. Sarah Kenehan, supported by Kate Yerkes, the University's MSCHE accreditation officer, will be developing the self-study calendar and workplan, and identifying membership for the steering committee and various working groups. These will be included with other organizational elements as part of the University's official Design for Self-Study, which will be submitted to MSCHE in early spring. Watch for updates and more information about the study process.

Global Affairs

The administration in Washington, DC has proposed a new rule to replace Duration of Status. The public commentary for this proposal just ended on Sept. 29, 2025.

Office of Student Support and Success

Disability Services:

- 135 requests for *academic* accommodation (around 14.5% of incoming first-year students)
- Matt Smith, Lauren Rivera and George Aulisio are looking for a new and permanent Neurodiverse space (The HUB) for students to decompress, quiet study space, eat, socialize and use for 2x/month neurodiverse Game Night.
- 5 Graduate Assistants support our students registered for accommodations with the transition to college through priority academic coaching.
- New Accommodation training was presented, recorded and being sent to all faculty in the near future by Tara Hamilton-Fay

Tutoring:

- Tutoring services went ‘live’ Tuesday 9/3/25 – holding 1111 sessions to date (930 were first-year students!)
- 100+ tutors have been hired (so far) to tutor over 145 subjects
- OSSS introduced the CRLA’s (College Reading and Learning Association) International Tutor Training Program in the 2024-25 year, with 61 tutors and 13 writing center consultants achieving their certificates.
- 14 Writing Center Consultants have been hired – new and returning

Center for Teaching Excellence

- Scheduled Workshops
Two sessions of *Unlocking Brightspace: Features for Interaction* were offered already this semester, the first on September 30, and another on October 7. This workshop explores Brightspace’s built-in tools to engage students inside and outside the classroom, including checklists, seating charts, and Panopto video quizzes and assignments. Additional workshops will be scheduled for October and November in coordination with Tara Hamilton-Fay, Faculty Coordinator for the CTE. Department-specific workshops can also be arranged, tailored to the needs of individual academic programs. Contact CTE Manager, Mary J. Murphy-Bowne at Ext. 4040.
- Course Evaluation Tool
Over the past month, Dr. LoBasso, Ms. Murphy-Bowne and Mr. Nguyen have been collaborating in preliminary meetings to vet potential course evaluation vendors. To date we have met with four vendors and are researching additional options for consideration.

We have also met with the Course Evaluation Committee—comprised of faculty members—to provide a high-level overview of our process for scheduling vendor demonstrations. The CTE has begun reviewing third-party options to replace the current homegrown evaluation tool, which Banner will not support indefinitely. The goal is to ensure that any new tool meets the committee’s established requirements. Once funding is secured, faculty will be invited to participate in demonstrations and provide input. Vendors we are considering include: Explorance Blue, Qualtrics Course Evaluation Tool,

SafeEvals, and Watermark. The timeline for implementation is spring 2026 with a soft launch summer 2026 and full launch in the fall.

- Academic Integrity Tutorial (AIT)

AIT is another homegrown system whose support will be ending soon. We are currently testing multiple methods of delivering a similar student and administrative experience through Brightspace. Pilot environments include AIT delivered as a Brightspace Quiz, Survey, Panopto Video, and SCORM package. The goal is to create a seamless transition using only available tools and systems without purchasing additional services.

- Extended Technical Consultant Availability

Requests for extended Brightspace technical support are increasing, particularly with the growth of online courses. To address this, we are expanding the availability of our Technical Consultant work study students (TechCons). Previously available only on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., TechCons are now also available during select weeknights and weekends. [You can see the TechCon lab hours for this semester on the CTE website.](#) Recruitment of additional techcons is underway to support this initiative.

- The Teaching Enhancement Grant

Application materials were originally scheduled for distribution to faculty in mid-September, with applications due in mid-October. However, the materials will now be distributed during the first week of October, with a revised submission deadline of November 1.

Colleges and Updates

College of Arts and Sciences

- A part-time animal caretaker was approved by the RMC. The search has just been posted.
- 3 TT faculty positions were approved by the RMC thus far: Microbiology, Mechanical Engineering and Organic Chemistry. They have been or will soon be posted.
- Plans are underway for a first-year full-time faculty Jesuit dinner. CAS has hosted this for several years and included KSOM and LCHS faculty last year. Date, time, and location will be sent out to said faculty soon.
- CAS department chairs and program directors are diving into their budgets to provide justifications for all of their 710 lines with a deadline of October 31st. The dean, associate dean, and assistant dean will then spend November meeting with each group and solidify recommendations to build out the FY27 budget to Finance by January.
- Course fees are being reviewed to determine if they are at the right level, need to be increased, or need to be added. Department chairs will notify the Dean by mid-October.
- Dr. Marenda and Ms. Schofield are visiting departments this fall to provide refreshers about advising to the faculty.
- Dean Barry and Dr. Marenda will attend the AJCU CAS Dean's Conference at Fairfield University next week. Dean Barry will be a part of a panel on budgeting approaches.

Then in fall 2026, the University of Scranton will host this conference, so plans are underway with Events Services for this opportunity to host.

- Dean Barry, Dr. Marenda and Ms. Butler are finishing meeting with all of their direct reports to set goals for staff evaluation for the coming academic year.
- Agreements have been finalized with St. Peter's Prep and St. Joe's Prep akin to the long-standing Scranton Prep agreement. It is expected these partnerships will launch for current high school seniors this fall to take advantage of these agreements.
- Dean Barry has worked with stakeholders across campus to create an agreement with Loyola University Maryland to create pipelines for each institution to send our undergraduates to our graduate programs that are distinctive. The agreement is in the final stage of review before being signed. Meanwhile, she has gathered stakeholders from UofS and Fairfield to build upon the existing 4+1 agreement we have with them for engineering to include other distinctive programs in CAS and LCHS to build an agreement with them for pipelines for our graduate programs.

Weinberg Memorial Library

- Prof. Kate Cummings was elected 1st Vice-President/President-Elect of the Pennsylvania Library Association
- The Joel Z. Krisanda Scranton-Area Zine Collection has been added to the McHugh Family Special Collections and University of Scranton Archives. The collection, named in memory of late library staff member and university alumnus Joel Krisanda currently contains issues of *Ergo Magazine*. We will be looking to add issues and titles to this collection.

Schemel Forum

- On Monday, October 20, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm, Tom Shieber, *Senior Curator at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, NY*, will deliver a *Schemel World Affairs Luncheon* on "Around the World with A.G. Spalding: The Mystery of an 1888-1889 Tourist's Diary"
- On Thursday, October 30, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm, Josef Wegner, Ph.D., *Professor of Egyptian Archaeology; Chair, Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures; Curator, Egyptian Section, Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania* will deliver a *Schemel World Affairs Luncheon* on "New Discoveries of the Penn Museum Excavations at Abydos, Egypt"