

Never Settle Strategic Academic & Business Plan: Driving to Cutting-Edge Academic Programs

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*As we continue our Special Report on the **Never Settle** ^[1] Strategic Academic & Business Plan, Provost Comrie discusses how we are changing our academic structures to help us effectively prepare our students and lead in the changing world of scholarship.*



By Andrew Comrie

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The UA recently was recognized by the Global Employability Survey as one of the top universities in the world for producing employable graduates. It's a prestigious distinction, and one the UA will strive to maintain as we educate students and prepare them for life in the global economy.

In yesterday's Special Report, Dr. Melissa Vito discussed emerging efforts to evolve our recruitment and retention activities to ensure we're meeting the needs of changing student demographics by providing multiple pathways to college degree attainment.

Today we look at what we need to do organizationally to meet these and the other goals we have set for ourselves with our **Never Settle** ^[1] Strategic Academic & Business Plan.

Our continued excellence in graduate education and as a research university relies on cutting-edge scholarship by our faculty. We have ambitious goals to grow our overall enrollment to 54,000 (including online learners) while raising our national profile. Our Never Settle plan lays out a number of valuable strategic actions that are enabling us to adjust and expand our academic programs to deliver on our goal of academic excellence through the "Engaging" pillar of the plan.

We have undertaken considerable steps in recent years to redesign and consolidate academic units into exciting new configurations. This change continues, and increasingly we are moving to the broader "school" model rather than limiting ourselves to narrower disciplinary and departmental structures. Academic units are beginning to view themselves as integrated and interdisciplinary teams of teaching and research specialists, allowing us to expand select areas of study that are ripe for growth.

We've already put this strategy into practice. Consider the School of Mind, Brain and Behavior – a synergistic partnership between the Neuroscience; Psychology; Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences; and Cognitive Science programs – which started a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science. In just three years, the number of students with this major has grown to 394. Forty percent of those students say they came to the UA specifically for this program. Also of note are the exciting and newsworthy developments in the School of Middle Eastern & North African Studies, which has won prestigious Flagship status and funding for its Arabic language program from the U.S. Department of Defense.

We know that research and teaching are a powerful combination for the student experience, as evidenced by the programs I've just discussed. This duo has fostered many creative interdisciplinary endeavors that have led to new pathways for learning and significant educational accomplishment. It's not going unnoticed – U.S. News & World Report recently recognized 14 UA programs among the top graduate programs in the nation.

We must continue to build upon this type of success and increase interdisciplinary opportunities that will set us apart from our peers and attract the top students and faculty who are looking for creative structures and programs to solve complex problems.

And speaking of faculty, there is incredible opportunity for us to build upon an already outstanding force for innovation and creativity. Part of our academic success story will rely on how we shape the faculty and our related institutional structures. We must grow the faculty so we can reach our teaching and research goals.

We also need to increase and capitalize on our diversity at all levels, with accountability. We have made national news with reforms to our promotion and tenure guidelines and we will continue to innovate in this area; it's imperative that our

post-tenure review system be as effective as possible.

To learn more about the UA's efforts toward "Driving to Cutting-Edge Academic Programs," plan to join President Hart, other senior leaders and me on Nov. 22 when we present the **Never Settle** ^[1] Strategic Academic & Business Plan to the Arizona Board of Regents. Details about the presentation can be found in this recent **campus memo** ^[2].

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Links

[1] http://www.neversettle.arizona.edu/?utm_source=uaatwork&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=neversettle [2]
http://president.arizona.edu/memos_letters/never-settle-strategic-academic-and-business-plan-presentation-abor-nov-22