

**Task Force: Boldness by Design- Strengthening Stewardship  
Strengthen stewardship--**

**By appreciating and nurturing the university's financial assets, campus infrastructure, and people  
for optimal effectiveness today and tomorrow.**

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**RECOMMENDATION 1: *Creating a Culture of Continuous Learning.***

Asking questions, engaging each other in finding answers in an ongoing manner, across disciplines and classifications.

**RATIONALE:** As an academic institution, ongoing learning would seem to be a foregone conclusion. However, in the fast pace of doing business, even educational institutions develop habits in which they fail to question enough, fail to engage in critical dialogue about essential questions, and fail to take time to hone and improve skills that allow new ways of learning and discovery. The consequence of failing to engage in ongoing learning is a waste of our collective human potential. Seeing ourselves as a continuous learning community, and aspiring to conduct our business in that mode, sets MSU apart as truly bold, and maximizes the potential of everyone in this academic community. With this as a goal, these recommendations follow:

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

- That the community of students, faculty, and staff at MSU invite the larger community and focus on a series of seminars and discussions that rotate biennially around three to four critical questions that capture some of the issues to be engaged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We propose that we set aside regular times and venues to have discussions around these questions over a two-year period. Such questions would likely be broad enough to support series of explorations and conversations within the campus community; for example, “How does global warming and global dimming affect our planning for the way we do work, and the way we live within the next decade?” The One Book, One Community project may serve as a model for this kind of engaged learning.
- That all faculty and staff required evaluation systems always include plans for professional development of skills relevant to the needs of both individuals as well as the institution, so that development and continued learning is embedded in the expectations of all workers at MSU, with opportunities for that development endorsed at evaluation.
- That, in being good stewards of our human resources, we consider learning for new roles an expected part of many jobs, including those in which the physical demands cannot be sustained until retirement, and plan for such learning and work evolution.
- That we consider wider accessibility and venues for everyone who learns and works at MSU to keep abreast of newer tools for learning and knowledge, both for the sake of learning, and for the sake of efficiency. For example, setting up an ongoing “computer petting zoo” for people on lunch hours to learn new skills with technology, or a “take a plant to lunch” series, where people gain new horticultural skills, both for work and pleasure. The organization and teaching of these opportunities would be by faculty, staff, students, and retirees, or teams of these people.
- That, for every major project, we regularly explore what we have learned in the project, that just as we systematically do planning and implementation, we also do a “post mortem.” This would apply to new buildings, new programs, new classes, new administrative initiatives, so that every project also ends with self-assessment and a set of critical questions. This would apply to both projects that seemingly are successful, as well as those that are less than successful.

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**RECOMMENDATION 2: *Creating a Culture of Effective and Efficient Use of Those Assets that Enable Our Success.***

**RATIONALE:** Certain assets are vital in pursuit of our institutional mission. These assets include financial resources, campus physical plant and related infrastructure, and information infrastructure – each of these helps enable the exceptional people of MSU to drive the success of our institution. Effective and efficient use of these catalysts is becoming more critical in a world where shrinking levels of state funding have coincided with increasing demands for accountability. Effective and efficient stewardship of these enabling assets will be imperative for our ongoing success in the future.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Although MSU has traditionally been effective and efficient with respect to asset use, several areas of special focus are suggested for the future. These include the following recommendations:

- Methods will be developed and adopted to align resource allocation, programs, and activities with strategic priorities across the University. This necessarily starts with a clear vision for the future of MSU with regard to both programs and enabling assets.
  - It will be important to build a strategic component into the University's budgeting process to align resource allocation with the vision, so that resource use (including use of faculty and staff talents, skills, and time) aptly reflects the priorities of the institution. In this manner, incremental funds will be distributed in a fashion to ensure support of the overall mission of the University.
  - The vision for campus infrastructure and buildings will align with programmatic priorities, and will be integrated whenever possible with existing plans for surrounding communities.
  - Opportunities will be explored for private/public partnerships wherever feasible.
- Each unit across the University will develop and implement methods to actively monitor progress toward goals. Monitoring will focus on measurable outcomes as they relate to strategic priorities and objectives.
- Active evaluation and progressive, thoughtful management of post-retirement benefits will be pursued. Alternatives will be sought that allow us to continue providing high-quality, cost-effective health care for active and retired faculty and staff while enhancing the potential for cost containment.
- Capacity for ongoing, structured assessment of stakeholder satisfaction will be developed across the mission. Key stakeholder groups will include students, faculty, staff, alumni, and employers of our graduates. Methods will include surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other approaches as appropriate.
- Building on our ability to monitor/demonstrate progress toward goals, and leveraging our stakeholder satisfaction, we will develop initiatives to expand our resource base and effectively decrease our reliance on state funds. Current fundraising momentum will be maintained by:
  - Increasing awareness of the need for coordinated fundraising efforts at the director/faculty level.
  - Focusing on efforts to grow the donor base.
  - Increasing the participation rate of current faculty/staff/retirees.
  - Working to ensure that coordinated efforts are in place to move all alumni and friends of the University along the involvement continuum toward becoming active donors.

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**RECOMMENDATION 3: *Creating a Culture of Good Citizenship.***

Cultivate more commitment to a culture of good citizenship, as experienced and expressed by individual MSU students, faculty members, staff members, alumni, and retirees.

**RATIONALE:** The quality of work and overall excellence of Michigan State University depend on the commitment, creativity, energy, and good will of each member of the community—each student, faculty member, and staff member. Each member of the community contributes special and significant talents, and both individual and collective responsibility and accountability are necessary for institutional health and effectiveness. A culture of good citizenship is enhanced when members of the community understand the values and directions of the institution, when individuals feel appreciated for their contributions, when individuals have opportunities to take on roles as leaders, and when members of the community have opportunities to interact with each other in various informal as well as formal venues.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** While MSU can be proud of its history of involved and committed students, faculty, staff, alumni, and retirees, specific actions will build on this history to enhance the culture of good citizenship. Thus, recommended actions include:

- Enhancing the flow of information through the university so that all members of the community feel knowledgeable about issues, initiatives, and challenges, and have the information they need both to perform their responsibilities as effectively as possible and to feel part of the overall endeavors of the university. Specific actions might include periodic newsletters from the Provost’s Office and a specific website that highlights key information important to the whole institution.
- Enhancing the sense of support and encouragement experienced by individual community members in their work through explicit honors and recognitions of excellent citizenship among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and retirees. Overall, MSU tends to be humble about its achievements; similarly, the university includes many “unsung heroes” whose contributions should be recognized through an expanded set of institutional honors and awards.
- Expanding the opportunities available to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and retirees to pursue leadership development. Leadership is not only associated with specific positions; individuals in all roles can exhibit important leadership abilities that strengthen the institution. Professional development opportunities that enable students, faculty, staff, alumni, and retirees to expand their talents as leaders will deepen the culture of citizenship and provide the institution with more individuals prepared to assume specific positions of leadership.
- Creating opportunities that promote connectivity among members of the university community. Specific actions might include more informal gatherings that bring together specific groups within the community (i.e., early career faculty) and specific physical locations for informal socializing.
- Embrace the vital importance of difference, and welcome the inherent strengths that accompany a diverse community. Specific actions should be taken to foster a broad base of cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competence across MSU, in service to achieving a model of inclusive excellence.

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**RECOMMENDATION 4: *Creating a Culture of Environmental Stewardship.***

Providing adequate preservation, care, and tending of the facilities and space that serve as the home of MSU are the tasks of stewardship that both challenge and sustain our current and future potential as an institution. The land, buildings, air, and water that we inhabit are not just “rental space,” but resources to be guarded, preserved and enhanced for today and tomorrow.

**RATIONALE:** In addition to preserving the beauty of the campus and its facilities, this commitment to stewardship safeguards the health of the individuals here, the health of our communities, and the sustainability and health of our planet and explicitly recognizes interdependence with others in our biosphere and responsibility to future generations.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** This focus includes action on the following:

- Careful consideration of the use of energy, land, water, and air in the planning for facilities, activities, living, and learning at MSU, with advice by knowledgeable faculty and staff.  
*An example of this objective is the integration of these specific environmental considerations in the current MSU planning principles, reviewed systematically before a project is begun.*
- Demonstration of our commitment to environmental preservation through the development of more efficient and effective methods of resource utilization; *for example, developing a new focus area every two years that reduces use of finite resources by 10%, or increases recycling into biodegradable products by 10%.*
- Education regarding and demonstrated concern for the health of the community, both at MSU and beyond, for the impact of our decisions on the use of energy, land, water, and air as well as other environmental resources; *for example, developing an educational campaign within the next three years that raises awareness of the link between responsible environmental stewardship and the community’s health.*
- Investment into research areas that have a particularly long term impact on the environment, such as energy use, built environment development, bio-mass initiatives, and waste reduction, including a short term goal of assessing ways in which broadened recycling programs make sense for MSU; *for example, creating a separate category for at least two annually funded projects through MSU grants with this focus.*
- Inclusion in our teaching, living, and learning a commitment to, and system of rewarding those who demonstrate general ecological awareness and responsible action within the entire community of MSU, guided by knowledgeable students, faculty, and staff; *for example, creating a focus group within the next three years in the MSU community where we celebrate and reward the residence halls, living learning communities, and staff unit leaders who are doing exemplary work in this area, to become an ongoing part of University rituals.*

Thus, in creating a culture of environmental stewardship, we can envision a campus in which waste in all forms is diminished; a campus where students, faculty, and staff regularly collaborate in creating new ways to care for our natural resources through conversations in classrooms, seminars, residence halls, and written plans; a culture where the use of energy and natural resources are expended no less carefully than money; a campus community where, when we plan a new building, we carefully consider what we exhaust as well as what we will preserve and create; a campus community in which we invent and share with the larger global community what we learn in our mission to be guardians and keepers of the space we inhabit.

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**RECOMMENDATION 5: *Creating a Culture Linking Past, Present, and Future.***

Embrace a set of values in support of access and wise use of institutional resources while protecting and preserving assets.

**RATIONALE:** The institutional mission of Michigan State University calls for development of new knowledge, as well as for sharing knowledge resources with its students and the public. Research, knowledge, collections, institutional history, and the process of discovery must be documented, searchable, organized and easily accessible.

The campus, as a symbol of cultural and institutional ideals, is part of a global society yet attached to its Michigan roots. The campus and its collections are resources of international standing and local meaning. Exhibiting responsibility for all University resources is an act of civic engagement and a sign of collective commitment. MSU must be intentional about making its knowledge assets available and demonstrating its public commitment to the stewardship of these assets.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

- Upgrade electronic records management to improve communication, eliminate redundant processing, assure privacy and security, and retain essential records and documents. Develop and implement a plan for all-University availability of electronic imaging, integrated systems training, and authorized access to secure information systems. Outcome: More productive work and research environment.
- Establish an electronic template for the presentation of University academic and administrative policies including last review date, governance responsibility, and consultative outcomes. Outcome: Improved understanding of institutional culture.
- Continue to improve MSU’s web presence to offer many points of visual entry. Improve linkages by inviting visitors to suggest new search terms. Outcome: Provision of more comprehensive updated information to MSU’s global community.
- Help the MSU community become vested in the institution’s commitment to the evolution of knowledge by exposure to historical achievements and involvement with current goals and future aspirations. Accelerate, expand, and present the oral history project. Engage faculty and students in research projects that apply their knowledge and skills and invite the MSU community to witness these firsthand or through virtual presentations and exhibitions. Outcome: Demonstration of commitment to lifelong learning.
- Encourage and expand individual and group participation in University rituals that underscore institutional values and become history in the making: academic events, cultural events, athletic events, mentoring, and campaigns for special projects. Outcome: Vibrant ongoing commitment to MSU as a leading global institution.