chapter 2
academic mission and vision
chapter 2

The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.

DIOGENES LAERTIUS
To ensure the continued success of the University, the LRDP reflects the University’s mission, vision and strategic academic plans. The University of Wyoming has taken care to formulate statements that summarize its mission and vision. These statements convey the values that define the culture and direction of the University, and will directly influence how the LRDP will shape the campus over time. This chapter provides an overview of the University’s academic context by presenting the mission, vision and academic direction.
The University of Wyoming Mission

The UW mission is the overarching inspiration that drives decision making on the UW campus and key concepts articulated in the Long Range Development Plan. The mission statement expresses the quality of desired experiences and interactions that take place on-campus. In doing so, the University’s mission also speaks to the desired physical environment of campus. The UW Mission Statement is as follows:

The University of Wyoming aspires to be one of the nation’s finest public land-grant research universities.

We serve as a statewide resource for accessible and affordable higher education of the highest quality; rigorous scholarship; technology transfer; economic and community development; and responsible stewardship of our cultural, historical, and natural resources.

In the exercise of our primary mission to promote learning, we seek to provide academic and co-curricular opportunities that will:

- Expose students to the frontiers of scholarship and creative activity and the complexities of an interdependent world;
- Ensure individual interactions among students, faculty, and staff;
- Nurture an environment that values and manifests diversity, free expression, academic freedom, personal integrity, and mutual respect; and
- Promote opportunities for personal growth, physical health, athletic competition, and leadership development for all members of the University community.

As Wyoming’s only university, we are committed to outreach and service that extend our human talent and technological capacity to serve the people in our communities, our state, the nation, and the world.

The primary vehicles for identifying the specific actions and resource allocations needed to accomplish this complex mission are the university’s strategic plans, revised periodically.
The University of Wyoming Vision

A vision for the University of Wyoming was put forth by the Office of Academic Affairs in the August 2008 document: Creation of the Future 3—Access, Excellence, Leadership. The vision expresses the scholarly direction that is expected within the University and among other schools. There are also several key elements identified in the vision statement that affect the physical design of campus. The vision describes the characteristics that make the UW campus outstanding: the unique geographic setting; the historic sense of place; and the educational integrity. This vision is central to the UW experience and will be implemented by the LRDP.

Alone among society’s institutions, universities both imagine the future and create it; and alone among states in the U.S., Wyoming entrusts this duty to a single, public, land-grant, research university.

The University of Wyoming is a community of scholars, learners, and leaders committed to two institutional hallmarks. The first is our mission to explore, create, and share knowledge, in areas that are meaningful to our constituencies and at a level of accomplishment that garners international recognition. The second is a culture that advances the intellectual and ethical capacities of our students and employees, with a degree of effectiveness that is exemplary among public universities.

The University of Wyoming is also an institution with a distinctive character. Counting among its assets a remarkable geographic setting, unparalleled statewide presence, and a heritage of strong public support, the university embraces both its historic sense of place and its mandate to create the future. We prize the institution’s stature as a national model for access to higher education, excellence in areas of inquiry that are relevant and important to the state and region, and the cultivation of leadership in civil society. We take pride in possessing the will to focus energy and resources on endeavors that build what Wallace Stegner envisioned as “… a society to match its scenery …”
The university recently completed its latest strategic planning process for the years 2009-2014. As stated in the University’s mission, the strategic plan implements the mission statement by calling-out specific, direction-setting action items. The strategic plan for 2009-2014 integrates the institution’s academic plan with plans for support services and capital facilities to ensure that all of these facets of the University mesh effectively with its major academic directions. The University Plan 3 identifies several strategic directions for the University in the 2009-2014 timeframe, including:

- Increasing research support for areas of distinction;
- Planning for the University’s computing infrastructure;
- Expanding energy-related teaching and research;
- Increasing sustainable and energy-efficient operations;
- Improving athletic facilities;
- Increasing enrollment and improving retention of students;
- Addressing diversity and internationalization; and
- Improving access for students and employees with disabilities.
Academic Direction and the LRDP

The academic context of the University of Wyoming covers a range of directives that specifically affect the planning and design of the campus. The vision calls for the University to serve as a national model for access to higher education. Based on consideration of the academic context, the University’s academic directives serve as guiding values of the LRDP. Through the lenses of the academic context, the LRDP calls for the creation of formal and informal areas to learn and exchange ideas. The directives identify multi-purpose and integrated spaces, emphasizing that learning continues outside of campus buildings.

The vision also notes that the strengths of the University include its remarkable geographic setting and historic sense of place. With a review and analysis of campus characteristics presented in Chapter 3, the LRDP focuses on increasing the campus’ distinctive character and sense of place. In addition, the planning and design principles and development framework presented in later chapters lead directly to the implementation of the University’s academic direction by establishing concepts to guide new growth and accommodate the expected increase in students.