2020 Strategic Vision:
Youngstown State University will become a national model for student success, academic excellence, resource stewardship, and regional engagement.

In summer 2010, Youngstown State University set out to envision the future: What will Youngstown State University “be” and “look like” in the year 2020? The result of that visioning process is the plan outlined here—YSU 2020: The Strategic Plan of Youngstown State University, 2011–2020.

The plan will chart institutional directions and help us align priorities, investments, and initiatives over the next decade. It establishes the framework for carrying out the Mission, Vision, and Core Values approved by the Youngstown State University Board of Trustees in December 2008:

Youngstown State University Mission Statement
Youngstown State University—an urban research university—emphasizes a creative, integrated approach to education, scholarship, and service. The University places students at its center; leads in the discovery, dissemination, and application of knowledge; advances civic, scientific, and technological development; and fosters collaboration to enrich the region and the world.

The University
• Creates diverse educational experiences that develop ethical, intellectually curious students who are invested in their communities;
• Provides access to a broad range of undergraduate programs;
• Offers graduate programs in selected areas of excellence, including those that meet the needs of the region;
• Supports economic development through applied learning and research;
• Integrates teaching and learning, scholarship, and civic engagement;
• Fosters understanding of diversity, sustainability, and global perspectives; and
• Advances the intellectual and cultural life of the city, region, and world.

Youngstown State University Vision Statement
Youngstown State University will become a national model for university-community engagement that enhances teaching and learning, student and faculty research, and community well-being. The University will expand its regionally focused mission to include national and international emphases, while working with other colleges and universities, business and industry, and the K-12 community to stimulate the economic, technological, and cultural rebirth of Ohio.
This Vision will be supported by

- Leading scholars and practitioners using multidisciplinary approaches to address societal challenges;
- Engagement of undergraduate and graduate students in research;
- Strategic development of undergraduate and graduate programs;
- Curricular and co-curricular integration of professional and liberal education, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills;
- An emphasis on applied learning and community engagement; and
- Respect for the deep and rich diversity of the communities we serve.

Youngstown State University Core Values

We—the faculty, staff, administrators, and students of Youngstown State University—hold the following values essential to achieving the University’s mission:

Centrality of Students

We are a student-centered institution committed to the education, development, well-being, and success of students of all ages and from all walks in life. In concert with our mission to help students grow intellectually, we strive to foster their personal, social, emotional, and career growth, as well as their capacities for lifelong learning, civic responsibility, and leadership.

Excellence and Innovation

We value excellence and innovation inside the classroom and out. Thus, we strive to integrate curricular and cocurricular activities; to offer outstanding academic programs; to foster intellectual inquiry, exploration, and discovery; to transcend traditional boundaries; to apply and perfect knowledge; to encourage creativity; to provide effective tools, technologies, and facilities for learning; and to excel in research and scholarly activity, including the “scholarship of teaching and learning”—an area of research that explores how individuals teach and learn.

Integrity/Human Dignity

As a campus community, we expect all conduct to be rooted in integrity, mutual respect, and civility. We value ethical behavior in scholarly and other endeavors; believe in the dignity and worth of all people; strive to foster an appreciation of, and respect for, differences among the human race; and celebrate the diversity that enriches the University and the world.

Collegiality and Public Engagement

As scholar-citizens of many extended and interconnected communities, we pledge to work collegially and cooperatively to enrich the cultural environment; establish productive partnerships; provide responsible leadership; address community and workforce needs; foster sustainability; and bring about the greater good of the collective whole—be it the University, the city of Youngstown, the state of Ohio, the region, or beyond.

Context for Planning:

YSU 2020, like the Mission, Vision, and Core Values, builds on a process that began in 2007–2008, when the Chancellor of the University System of Ohio issued Ohio’s Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2008–2017. That plan classified Youngstown State University as an “Urban Research University” with an obligation to “provide the Youngstown area with the talent and research base for the growth of new companies and industry to replace those that have been lost to a changing economy” (p. 48). The state plan also laid the groundwork for an outcomes-based (rather than enrollment-driven) state funding formula and established a mandate for dramatically increasing the number of students enrolled in Ohio’s colleges and universities by 230,000 students by the year 2017.

The new funding formula and YSU’s evolving mission—along with the declining state and national economy and shrinking state support—pose both challenges and opportunities that the University must address. In the words of YSU Board chair Scott Schulick, “the stakes are high.” We can’t just continue to do exactly what we’ve always done, in the way that we’ve always done it. YSU 2020 offers a framework for addressing challenges and opportunities. It offers direction for making Youngstown State University a dynamic and positive force for education, renewal, and poverty reduction in the region and beyond.
The Strategic-Planning Process:

Dr. Cynthia E. Anderson took office as YSU’s seventh President on July 1, 2010. A few weeks later, the Youngstown State University Board of Trustees, President Anderson, and the President’s Cabinet gathered for a planning retreat, facilitated by Dr. Ellen Chaffee, a consultant from the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. This group defined four critical “cornerstones,” or focuses, upon which to build the University’s next strategic plan:

- **institutional accountability and sustainability**, or good stewardship of the institution’s financial, physical, and human resources;
- **student success**;
- **transition to the urban research university mission**; and
- **regional engagement**.

The 52-member Strategic Planning Steering Committee—chaired by Dr. Ikram Khawaja, YSU’s Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Mr. Eugene Grilli, Vice President for Financial Affairs—met for the first time on July 15, 2010. Committee members included faculty, staff, students, administrators, Board of Trustees members, and community representatives (see Appendix A). By the end of the meeting, all had received an overview of the focused and fast-paced planning process that would follow. In addition, each had volunteered to serve on one or more of the four “cornerstone groups” to begin the work of planning.

A fifth group volunteered to manage communications related to the planning process, so that the campus and area communities could stay informed about the planning process and participate if they desired. The University conducted more than 20 focus groups with various campus constituencies and members of the community at large. In addition, interested parties could respond anonymously to web-based questionnaires. Several hundred people participated in one or more of these data-gathering activities.

Instead of the typical 12–18 months normally devoted to a major strategic-planning process, the Steering Committee and cornerstone groups accomplished the task in four months: August, to get organized; September, to gather data; October, to organize components of the plan; and November, to write the document that would go to the Board of Trustees in December 2010.

Some Guiding Principles:

In addition to the core values stated earlier, YSU is committed to two overarching principles that can be seen in each of the four cornerstones and that must guide each of the University’s activities and initiatives:

- commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, in the broadest sense; and
- commitment to “continuous quality improvement,” or a “culture of assessment.”

Commitment to inclusiveness and diversity must make itself felt in the University’s daily activities; in hiring decisions; and in the University’s recruitment and retention initiatives. It applies equally to employees in every category; to traditional and nontraditional students of every description; to campus visitors; and to companies that do business with the University.

Likewise, a commitment to widespread assessment, or continuous quality improvement, applies not only to teaching and learning but also to every initiative, activity, and Division of the University. By defining outcomes, evaluating how well we meet them, and using the results to adjust course if necessary, we can align budget with priorities, make informed budget decisions, and facilitate positive change.

Organization of the Planning Document:

Following this introductory “chapter” are four discrete chapters that form the core of the plan—one chapter for each of the four cornerstones of YSU 2020. The four chapters present the four cornerstones in detail.

Each cornerstone chapter, or section, is organized as follows:

- The cornerstone begins with a narrative overview, outlining three or four themes, or topics, around which that section of the plan is organized.

- After the narrative overview, a more detailed explanation follows, outlining priorities, initiatives, and metrics that can be used to measure progress in achieving that portion of the plan. The priorities are both listed and described in narrative format.

The priorities are significant strategic objectives or goals that span multiple divisions of the University and sometimes the University as a whole. Initiatives are specific projects or actions that will support achievement of the strategic priorities. Metrics are measurable data points that can be tracked backward to establish a baseline, and forward to 2020, to determine whether the University meets the 2020 goals.

Some of the metrics are particularly significant and constitute a set of measurements known as “Institutional, or Board, Metrics,” since the Board of Trustees will track these metrics regularly to assess progress on the plan. The Institutional/Board Metrics appear in Appendix B.