

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY PLAN FOR STRATEGIC ACTIONS TO TAKE CHARGE OF OUR FUTURE

ACADEMIC PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT & EFFECTIVENESS INITIATIVE

OVERVIEW

Youngstown, like every academic institution, has recently faced a confluence of market dynamics that are unprecedented in their complexity and significance. These conditions create substantial risk to the mission and economic wellbeing of our University community if left unexamined. We have chosen a partnership with Gray Associates to ensure a data-informed process for the Academic Program Enhancement and Effectiveness Initiative.

This is an action anticipated through the *Plan for Strategic Actions to Take Charge of Our Future* endorsed by the YSU Board of Trustees in June 2020.

THE PROCESS

This review process is a collaboration between faculty and administration. The role of Gray Associates is to provide the data, systems, and facilitated processes to support Youngstown as it considers decisions that are:

- **Data-Informed:** While the best available data should inform program decisions, human judgment and institutional knowledge are always essential.
- **Collaborative:** Bringing together the right people and the right data to discuss and agree on program choices leads to better decisions.
- **Software-Supported:** Software will help support decision making by organizing and interpreting data on 1,400+ current and potential programs.
- **Inclusive and Transparent:** Data will be shared in real-time with university stakeholders at workshops. Afterwards, data and systems are available for continued use by each university.

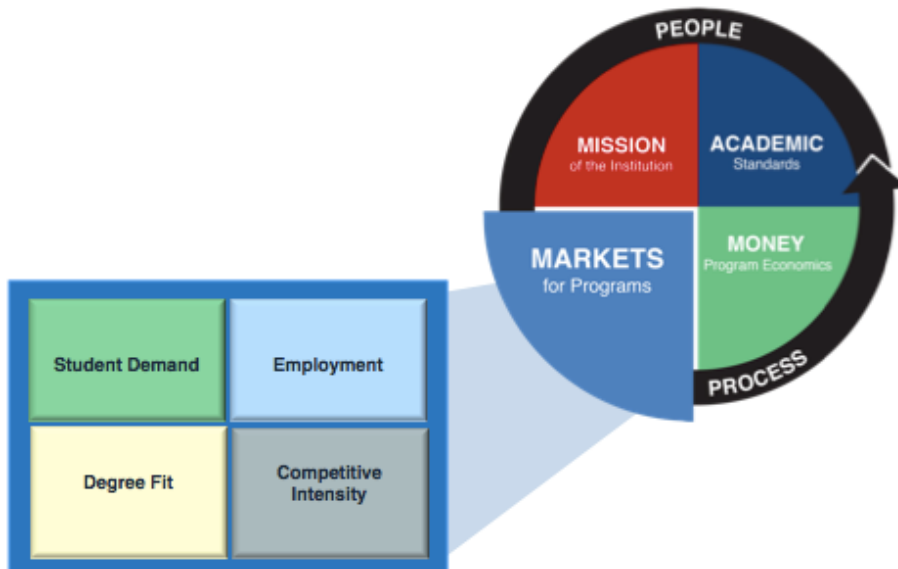
As illustrated below, Gray believes sound program decisions must address fit with the institution's mission, academic standards, markets, and money (program margins). These factors should inform a decision-making process that includes both faculty and administrative leaders.



Gray provides two software programs to inform the program review process:

- **Program Evaluation System (PES+)**
- **Program Economics Platform**

Gray's Program Evaluation System (PES+) offers comprehensive, current data on student demand, employment opportunities, degree fit, and competitive intensity for the markets that YSU serves.



Gray uses several datasets to provide perspective in each of these areas:

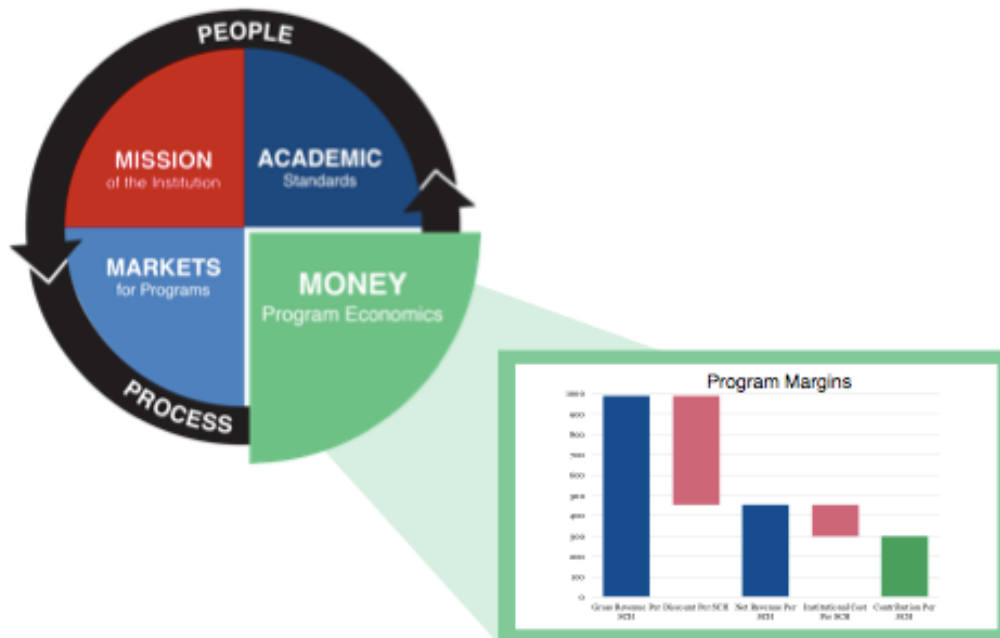
- **Student Demand:** Gray uses three sources to track the volume and growth of student interest by program:

- **Inquiries:** Gray has developed a database of over 70 million program inquiries by location, degree level, and modality (online or on-campus). This information is updated quarterly.
- **Google Search Volume:** Gray tracks approximately 20 keywords, by county, for each of the 200 largest programs, which represent over 80% of all program completions. This data is updated monthly.
- **IPEDS Completions:** Gray includes completions by program as reported by all Title IV institutions to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This data is updated annually and currently reflects 2018 completions.
- **IPEDS/NC SARA Online Completions:** IPEDS reports most online completions at the headquarters location of the institution. For example, University of Phoenix completions are reported in Phoenix. Gray uses several sources, including IPEDS completions and NC SARA (state-level reporting for online institutions) to track local online students attending local and out-of-state institutions. This places students in the local markets where they are studying.
- **Employment:** Gray uses several sources to understand employment opportunities for graduates and the degrees and skills that employers seek. We have enhanced the Bureau of Labor Statistics total occupational employment information by more accurately representing the jobs graduates actually get. For example, Gray's data highlights hundreds of occupations that Liberal Arts graduates go into that are often not represented in BLS employment data. This alignment of programs and jobs is based on three sources of information:
 - **American Community Survey (ACS):** Using data from two million bachelor's-degree respondents, Gray provides employment information and career path mapping. This information allows universities to better understand employment potential and advanced degree attainment.
 - **The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS):** provides the total number of people employed in a field, historical employment trends, and a 10-year forecast. This data is updated annually and currently reflects the 2018 survey.
 - **Job Postings:** Gray analyzes job postings and calculates the total number of job postings by occupation, program, location, and degree level requested. This data is updated quarterly.
- **Competition:** Gray uses IPEDS to determine the number of competitors in a market. We also provide data on completions per capita (a measure of market saturation) and marketing costs, including Google cost-per-click and the average cost per inquiry. For every program, we also include national distance education competition. Our competitive data accounts for online students in local markets, as described above.

- **Degree Level:** We provide data on completions and employment by degree award level.

Gray customizes its program scoring rubrics to align with YSU’s priorities. Once these rubrics are established, over 1,400 IPEDS programs are scored and ranked. *The system also generates a one-page scorecard for each program that includes over 50 variables for analysis and discussion.*

Gray’s Program Economics Platform tracks gross revenue, institutional scholarships and grants, instructional cost, and margins, by student and course. Margin analysis enables universities to use high-margin programs to subsidize lower-margin, mission-critical programs and other activities.



Youngstown can see financial results by program, course, location, and student segment. To protect privacy, all student and faculty identities are encrypted before they are given to Gray.

Gray’s data on “markets and money” are then incorporated into a two-day workshop involving members of the faculty and institutional leadership.

Program Workshops: September 24 and 25, 2020

During the workshop, the Youngstown team will refine the scoring rubrics and set the weights for evaluating programs. Potential new programs will be identified, and current programs will be recommended to Start, Sunset, Sustain, or Grow. By the end of Day 2, the team will have made preliminary recommendations on all current and potential new programs. The agenda is illustrated below:

Illustrative Workshop Agenda and Outcomes

Day 1	Day 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present workshop objectives ▪ Summarize approach to program selection ▪ Share scoring baseline outcomes ▪ Discuss and refine scoring system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakout groups - Full group ▪ Rerun scores using refined scoring system ▪ Evaluate proposed programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakout - Full group ▪ Rank and select new programs to Start for further consideration and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review Day 1 outcomes ▪ Review current programs ▪ Discuss high- and low-scoring programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakout groups - Full group ▪ Identify programs to Grow, Sustain, Fix or, Sunset for consideration and further evaluation ▪ Wrap-Up: Agree on next steps, tasks, owners, and deadlines



▪ **Programs to Start**



▪ **Programs to Grow, Sustain, Fix, or Sunset**

Youngstown will then take the output from the workshop and review the recommendations in conjunction with any other data and internal program review analyses currently used on campus.

ADDITIONAL STEPS

Gray will assist with the development of an easy to understand dashboard that illustrates selected academic program attributes as well as mission related information and goals and objectives to improve the program. This will respond directly to the academic program assessment anticipated via the Higher Learning Commission.

Gray will also assist in the assessment of curricular efficiency that will contribute directly to optimizing course offering and course scheduling.