Professor Nancy Cohen, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Oversight, informed the Senate the Co-Chair Amilcar Shabazz was unable to attend the meeting because of an illness.

The graphics presented in the PowerPoint come from the Framework for Excellence document.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Oversight (AHCSO) was charged to lead the faculty discussion of the Framework for Excellence, develop a coordinated and unified response to the Framework, monitor the development of administrative and academic unit plans, and lead the faculty discussion in response to those plans. This year, with many changes and progress, the Committee focused on creating an interim report on the University’s progress towards the goals laid out in the Framework for Excellence. Professor Cohen thanked all the Committee members for their hard work.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Oversight met three times during the Fall 2011 semester and once during the Spring 2012 semester. Additional subcommittee meetings also took place.

The Committee utilized a number of sources to access and analyze its data, including the University’s Office for Institutional Research; the Center for Measuring University Performance; as well as Academic Analytics, which has a comparison for AAU universities; and the U.S. News and World Report indicators, because President Caret mentioned at a previous Faculty Senate meeting that he wanted UMass to be a U.S. News top-25 public university. Associate Provost Bryan Harvey presented at the Committee’s November meeting and provided data relating to that ranking system. Deputy Chancellor Todd Diacon’s Framework for Excellence Scorecard was also used.

The vision within the Framework noted that UMass Amherst aspires to be among the very best public research universities, matching the excellence of the public universities that are members of the AAU. The Committee wondered where UMass would stand if it were part of the AAU. There are 59 AAU members and, looking at the Academic Analytics data, UMass would rank among them 47 in faculty, 46 in books, 48 in articles, 48 in citations, 50 in grants, and 52 in grant dollars. We are not 60; we are within the AAU’s range. Academic Analytics has a category for AAU-potential universities. There are 65 institutions in that category, including UMass. Among those 65 we range anywhere from 7 to 16 in rankings.

In terms of faculty development, the goal was to increase the size of the faculty to 1,200 by the year 2020. From 2009 to 2011, tenure track faculty has increased, though not to 1,200. The Committee believes that faculty hiring is still a major priority for the University. As we grow, we should examine the role of non-tenure-track faculty and have a clear idea about what kind of growth we need there.

The Framework mentions increasing faculty compensation, as the University is below its peers in terms of salaries for assistant and full professors. The first round of extraordinary merit increases has occurred, and the Committee has recommended that the data on faculty compensation be re-examined to see what additional approaches may still be necessary. National Academy Member awards have been relatively stable at the University over the past decade or so.

The goals for research and development included doubling federal research awards. Both federal research and sponsored research awards have been relatively stable over the past five years if you do not include the one-time ARA funding. It is important to expand the University’s research enterprises.

Another goal was to increase post-doctorates at the University. However, the number of post-doctorates on campus has been declining since 2008.
The Framework advocates an increase to 375 doctorate degrees awarded each year. Overall, there has been about a stable amount of doctorates awarded in each of the past five years. The University hopes to eliminate roadblocks that increase the time-to-degree for doctoral students. Stipends for TAs have increased, but the cost of living remains a concern. Demand for TAs has increased in recent years, as small sections and undergraduate student numbers have increased; however, the TA supply has been generally stable.

There have been many initiatives and accomplishments in undergraduate education recently. First-year experience has been central, with the Common Read, Convocation, first-year seminars, and Residential Academic Programs being created or increasing. Informal feedback from students is very positive and the Committee recommends that there be more formal evaluation of students and that the faculty perspective be included in any report.

The Framework recommends expanding undergraduate research opportunities. There were some indicators here but the Committee believes more indicators could be used in the future, such as independent study credits, honors projects, undergraduate theses, and funding for undergraduate initiatives.

Much activity has surrounded General Education. The three- to four-credit conversion, the Integrative Experience, and other advances have recently taken place. There was some concern in the Committee as to whether funding and space has kept up with its growth and development. The Committee recommends that the decentralized funding model that the University has for General Education be re-examined to make sure that it is meeting current demand.

In terms of residential life, there are goals to strengthen the academic and student affairs connections and also to offer small-enrollment academic courses in residence halls. The Committee feels that increased communication between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs would be beneficial. It is also important to get faculty involved in these decisions and to make sure that funding plans are built into these initiatives.

The Framework put forth goals to expand efforts to recruit students from diverse communities and also to establish feeder programs in areas such as Springfield. Overall, the ALANA student base has been relatively stable over the past few years, around 20% of students, so the Committee felt that to make larger increases in ALANA students we would need a concerted and specific initiative dedicated to increasing campus diversity. The enrollment of international students was targeted for an increase, and international students have increased back to the levels the University had in 1997. Another objective concerned ensuring diversity representation in all search committees. The Committee did not review the University’s Affirmative Action Plan, but it did note that the ALANA faculty and staff did increase from 2007-2010, but decreased slightly in 2011.

There has been much progress in the area of facilities and physical planning. Many buildings are going up and the University has a comprehensive Master Plan. There have been some more recent issues that were unrelated to the Framework for Excellence document, including developments regarding the University Health Services building and athletic infrastructure needed for FBS Football status. The Framework did acknowledge that once new buildings were constructed there would also be renovations to older buildings to improve their use. The Framework did not include any plan to address maintenance or deferred maintenance. The Committee noted that these are ongoing issues that should be addressed.

In terms of enrollment and demographics, the target was to increase undergraduate enrollment to 22,500 by 2020, and already, since 2007, the University has had a 7.5% growth. This does not match the 2% growth in faculty. To have a further 10% growth in undergraduate enrollment without a concurrent growth in faculty, TAs, and facilities will not create the positive outcomes desired. In future targets, a student-to-tenure-track faculty ratio should be incorporated. The Framework puts forth a further objective to increase out-of-state students to 6,500. The out-of-state student body did increase to 4,351, a 32% increase, in 2011. There have been many efforts to increase out-of-state funding, and the revenue associated with that has been anticipated in projections. The Committee has recommended tracking out-of-state funding to make sure that there would not be an over commitment of funds if the predicted out-of-state enrollment numbers do not materialize.

In terms of development, the goal has been to double the annual fund and also double the University’s endowment. The levels of giving vary from year to year, but have been relatively stable. In 2010, there was a very large gift to the University. The endowment has been relatively stable. Of course, all endowments went down in 2009. UMass went
down in 2009, but the University’s national ranking went up because its endowment went down less than most other institutions.

Outreach goals involved establishing connections in Springfield, expanding distance education and summer programs, and being involved in more community college partnerships. The Committee didn’t look at Continuing and Professional Education indicators, so it cannot say how the University is doing at this point. The Committee did note, however, that there are a lot of other potential outreach goals that could be incorporated into future planning. These include asking what kind of audience the University wants to reach, what other types of outcomes could there be for students, what transportation could be offered for students, and what rewards might be possible to offer faculty that are involved in and encourage outreach initiatives.

The Committee did not have any data related to communications and University Relations, but it did note that in the future it would be useful to engage a broader delegation of legislators in our University Relations.

Then the Committee addressed the U.S. News and World Report rankings, looking at the criteria that that ranking uses and determining how UMass could become a top-25 public university. By and large, their indicators relate to undergraduate education. They include:

Graduation Rate. Although it varies demographically, the graduation rate at UMass has generally improved over the past few years.

Undergraduate Academic Reputation. This indicator is a survey of peers and high school counselors. These have been relatively stable for UMass.

Six-year Graduation and One-year Retention Rates. These rates have improved at UMass over the last decade.

Alumni Giving. This has increased recently.

Financial Resources. UMass has gone down in this area, although the Committee was unclear on what information U.S. News uses when determining this indicator.

Student Selectivity. This indicator represents the university’s acceptance rate, the number of students in the top 10% of their high school classes, and SAT scores. Overall, the University has been more selective recently.

Faculty Resources. This includes faculty compensation, student-faculty ratio, and percentage of small classes. For a couple of years, UMass was declining in this area, but it has improved recently. This could possibly be due to the increased number of small class sections for first-year students.

Overall, UMass ranked 45 in the U.S. News rankings in 2008, 52 in 2010, and it now stands at 42. However, it is clear that the criteria used in these rankings are very different than the items and criteria within the Framework for Excellence document.

To conclude, the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Oversight has summarized a number of observations: there has been progress in many components of the Framework, although there has been no change or even a decline in some areas; the Framework and U.S. News use different indicators; UMass is within the range of AAU members in terms of research and faculty; and increasing the number of faculty is key to achieving all of the research and teaching outcomes desired.

If future strategic planning is undertaken, the Committee recommends that faculty and students should be engaged in setting that vision and in participating in the planning, that specific indicators should be prioritized, that goals should be identified based on the data that exists and from information obtained from stakeholders, that action plans and budgets should be identified, and that evaluations should be used to track milestones throughout the process.