COMET Strategic Plan 2011-2015
Original draft:
Feb 25, March 04, and March 18 2011
Updated:
June 14 2012

Vision (next 10 years)
In 2020, COMET will continue to be a highly respected, world-wide leader in support
of education and training for the environmental sciences, delivering scientifically
relevant and instructionally progressive products and services.

Mission (next 5 years)
The COMET Program creates environmental science education and training in
support of a diverse community of users by offering the following products and
services:
● Media-rich, interactive, multi-lingual distance learning
● Internet-based synchronous and asynchronous courses
● The MetEd website with user tracking and assessment system
● Residence courses, workshops, and meetings
● Small grants program (Outreach)
● Leadership and consultation in science education and training

Organizational Purpose:
1. Core Values: Provide a quality learning experience based on sound science
2. Customers: National and international science-based organizations,
environmental professionals, educational community, and the public
3. Products/Services:
   ○ Media-rich interactive distance learning (multi-lingual)
   ○ Web-based synchronous courses
   ○ MetEd and the user tracking and assessment system
   ○ Residence courses, workshops, and meetings
   ○ Small grants program (Outreach)
   ○ Leadership and consultation in science education and training
4. Value Proposition: COMET offers comprehensive, cost-effective solutions to
   a broad range of educational and training needs:
   ○ Access to a wide range of experts
   ○ Access to a large library of content and media resources covering a
     broad range of topics and tools
   ○ Diverse in-house skill sets (science, graphics, programming,
     instructional design, etc.)
   ○ Large and diverse global audience

Context for the Plan
The rapid evolution of science and technology continues to challenge those in the
environmental sciences community to maintain up-to-date scientific knowledge.
Sound scientific and technical knowledge is needed to issue accurate and effective warnings and forecasts, and to perform long-range planning for the protection and economic benefit of society. Additionally, many atmospheric scientists, the core audience for COMET materials, are being asked to assume roles that require broader interdisciplinary knowledge of the environmental sciences. As a result, COMET sponsors need new and continually more diverse training to ensure that their professional workforce and user communities can operate efficiently and effectively. The academic community, too, must be responsive to these changes in preparing students to enter scientific professions. In the face of these changes, COMET and its partners must continue to be proactive in identifying evolving education and training needs, and in developing and delivering relevant, cost-effective training. To achieve this, COMET must also leverage other substantial education and training programs existing within UCAR and our sponsor community.

Over the past 5 years, COMET has worked hard to fulfill all the goals outlined in the 2006-2010 strategic plan:

- We have continued to enhance our capabilities to produce innovative, high-quality, and cost-effective training in response to the needs of the professional and university environmental science communities. We offer a wider variety of approaches than ever before, while always maintaining scientific and instructional quality.
- We have fostered applied research partnerships between universities and forecasters, and played an important leadership role in science and technology transfer from research to operations through our education and training efforts.
- We have leveraged our alliances with traditional partners in the atmospheric sciences and developed new supportive relationships within the broader environmental science community. For example, recent new sponsors and partners include: NOAA’s Sea Grant, National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, and Office of Response and Restoration/Emergency Response Division; the Department of Interior US Bureau of Reclamation; Maryland Emergency Management Agency; National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group; New York University; Eumetcal, and the Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration.
- We have worked to enhance support for universities, particularly as they prepare students for careers in the environmental sciences, by offering all our modules and resources free of charge and providing more convenient access in a variety of forms.
- We have aggressively pursued climate training initiatives, publishing a highly visible module on climate change and developing a new climate impacts training effort partnering with the US Bureau of Reclamation.
- There has also been a dramatic increase in activities to support the international community. COMET continues to solidify its worldwide reach, and as of February, 2011, the MetEd Website has over 182,000 (June 2012 update: over 233,000) registered users from nearly 200 countries, with about half coming from the educational community.
Strategic Plan
The basis of the COMET 2011-2015 Strategic Plan is the continued achievement of sponsor goals by delivering high-quality environmental science education and training to the global community. To do so, COMET will need to be nimble and innovative. There will be increasing competition from other groups able to produce multimedia instruction, and at the same time increased expectations for high-end media. Given constrained sponsor budgets, COMET must therefore work toward even greater efficiency without sacrificing the quality of its products and services. Increased accountability for funding received means we must also find new ways to measure the benefit of our products to end users to justify costs.

We expect that the general trend in the next 5 years will be toward an increased demand for customized solutions and an expectation for facilitated learning experiences, delivered via an increasingly diverse set of platforms and technologies. Similarly, we anticipate a continued expansion of our user community, including greater engagement of universities and international users in addition to a broadening audience of professionals in the environmental sciences.

With these changes in mind, our strategic goals center on four major areas:
● Delivering sound, relevant environmental science education and training that meets sponsor and user needs
● Developing innovative and cost-effective products and services
● Nurturing existing alliances and developing new relationships to enable COMET partners in reaching their goals
● Ensuring program stability to provide a firm foundation for the decades to come

Assumptions for the Future
● More competition—more groups able to produce quality distance learning
● Tighter budgets and accountability
● Continued need to broaden our content areas and audience
● Higher expectations for high-end media
● More facilitated learning experiences
● Greater demand for customized solutions
● Change in internal leadership
● Staff skill sets will evolve with changing demands for products/services
● More diverse instructional delivery platforms and devices

Major Changes
1. Expansion of international program
2. Greater engagement of university users
3. Broadening of the user community
4. Broader range of topics
COMET Strategic Goals

Science
Goal 1.0: Develop and deliver sound, relevant environmental science education and training that meets the needs of our sponsors and users.

1. Develop and maintain internal expertise to ensure sound science content.
2. Foster productive relationships with external experts to ensure sound science content.
3. Offer continuing education for professionals.
4. Provide support for educators in their efforts to prepare students for careers in operational and applied settings.
5. Increase the general public environmental science literacy.
6. Expand the scope of educational offerings on environmental issues.
7. Develop training materials on the use of environmental data to aid decision making (e.g., expand training opportunities for first responders and other emergency personnel).
8. Seek opportunities to work with sponsors to measure the benefit of our products to end users.

Instruction and Technology
Goal 2.0: Develop and deliver innovative and cost-effective products and services.

1. Produce and deliver quality asynchronous distance education.
2. Conduct residence and virtual courses for learning situations that require direct experience and engagement with experts.
3. Expand blended learning opportunities.
4. Apply the latest in educational theory and technology to structure, manage, and distribute materials using a variety of methods (e.g., custom simulations, smart readiness) and platforms (e.g., expand usability of training modules for mobile devices).
5. Adapt IT infrastructure and system capabilities to ensure reliable delivery of an expanded suite of products and services.
6. Provide consulting services for other sponsor training needs (e.g., competency-based training systems such as the Professional Development Series).

Relationships and Audience
Goal 3.0: Nurture existing alliances and develop new relationships to assist COMET partners in achieving their goals.

1. Maintain and strengthen relationships with national and international organizations with responsibilities in relevant fields.
2. Investigate improved strategies for science transfer to reduce the time it takes for important research findings to reach users and decision makers.
3. Develop new methods and strategies to support university instruction. (e.g., develop a core set of dynamic meteorology learning objects).
4. Support joint applied research and communication projects through the COMET Outreach Program, linking researchers and students with operational personnel.
5. Develop stronger connections with the private sector to strengthen the U.S. weather and climate enterprise.
6. Collaborate with UCAR education groups to increase public environmental science literacy.

**Sponsorship/Organizational Needs**

**Goal 4.0: Ensure program stability.**

1. Respond to evolving sponsor needs (e.g., continue to expand opportunities to provide training in climate science, Arctic regions).
2. Expand the breadth of our funding base.
3. Maintain a diverse and flexible work force.
4. Ensure a productive and supportive work environment.
5. Manage a smooth transition as program leadership changes.