



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

# Strategic Planning Council

November 2007

## Strategic Plan

*Final Draft*

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### University Strategic Planning

California State University, Sacramento has developed steadily over the decades since its founding in 1947 as the city of Sacramento's only fully comprehensive university. With more than 28,000 students, 180,000 alumni and 3,000 employees, our University is a major component of the Sacramento region's economic engine and a source of pride for the community.

As do nearly all institutions of higher learning, Sacramento State faces two related challenges today, each of which is at once a problem and an opportunity: 1) an increasingly complex environment shaped by sociopolitical, economic, technological, and demographic changes of global proportions and significant regional impact and 2) related state and local financial pressures upon the CSU and our own institution. Additionally, we are being asked by our accreditation body, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), to address several issues, the most pressing of which are assessment of learning outcomes for our students and improvement of our graduation rate. We can respond to these challenges wholly reactively, or we can plan *actively* and *strategically* to meet them and to turn them to our students' and the community's advantage.

Sacramento State's current *Strategic Plan*, though revised periodically, is now more than a decade old. It requires more than minor revision. In 2006, President Alexander Gonzalez established the University's Strategic Planning Council (SPC; see [www.csus.edu/spc](http://www.csus.edu/spc)) whose membership is comprised of students, faculty, staff and administrators. SPC is charged with review of and recommendations regarding planning action priorities and their implementation at the University level. Its first and current task is revision of the University's *Strategic Plan*. To this end, SPC has carefully studied our current *Plan* and the plans of many other universities. We have paid close attention to the *mission* of the University and that of the California State University more generally. We have studied the current mission statements and strategic plans of the various units of our University. We have formed a sense of our *vision* through the University's "Destination 2010" initiative. Finally, we have sought to clarify the *core values* of our campus community.

## California State University, Sacramento

### Our Mission

California State University, Sacramento commits itself to providing Access for all eligible students, continually pursuing Excellence in teaching, learning, and student support, building upon our already exceptional Diversity such that all members of our community are respected and participate collaboratively in every aspect of University life, enhancing the quality of life in the Region and the state, and instilling Pride in all who view this campus as their own.

(Distilled from "Mission Statement," March 29, 2004 [[www.csus.edu/webpages/mission.stm](http://www.csus.edu/webpages/mission.stm)])

### Our Vision

California State University, Sacramento will be known throughout and increasingly beyond the Sacramento Region for its excellent and comprehensive academic and co-curricular student programs. We will be a key partner in developing the highly diverse "New California." We will recruit the best faculty and staff and utilize the best in teaching and learning technology. We will be recognized as a beautiful and inviting regional destination. We will be a source of pride for and increasingly enjoy the support of the Greater Sacramento Region.

(From "Destination 2010," [[www.csus.edu/destination2010/main.stm](http://www.csus.edu/destination2010/main.stm)])

### Our Core Values

Against this backdrop, in spring 2007, SPC initiated the University's strategic planning process through a focus upon the values of the campus community. Through general forum and other community feedback, SPC fashioned a "core values" document against which strategic planning and other planning and policy efforts can be studied and evaluated.

WHO ARE WE?	WHAT DO WE VALUE?
<p><b>California State University, Sacramento is an <i>institution of higher education</i>.</b> Institutions of higher education encourage critical thought and expression, explore perspectives and cultures from around the globe, engage student learning, develop the life of the mind, and prepare students for lives beyond the university.</p>	<p><b>As an institution of higher education, we value:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellence in Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Intellectual Freedom</li> <li>• Inquiry, Research, and Scholarship</li> <li>• Civility, Integrity and Ethical Behavior</li> <li>• Innovation and Creativity</li> <li>• Global Perspectives</li> </ul>
<p><b>California State University, Sacramento is a <i>public institution</i>.</b> As part of the California State University, we emphasize high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education. We offer opportunities to help students meet their personal and professional goals.</p>	<p><b>As a public institution in the California State University, we value:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Higher Education</li> <li>• Opportunities for Student Achievement and Success</li> <li>• Diversity and Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Accountability to Ourselves and our Constituents</li> <li>• Shared Governance that is Supportive, Open, and Transparent</li> </ul>
<p><b>California State University, Sacramento is a <i>comprehensive university</i>.</b> As contrasted against large research institutions, private liberal arts colleges, and proprietary universities, Sacramento State is a comprehensive university. Thus, we focus on both undergraduate and graduate education and offer programs and degrees in liberal arts and professional studies.</p>	<p><b>As a comprehensive university, we value:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Liberal Arts-Based Learning Experience</li> <li>• Professional and Applied Learning</li> <li>• Breadth of Academic Co-curricular Offerings</li> <li>• Collaborative Learning and Engagement</li> <li>• A Complete University Experience</li> </ul>
<p><b>California State University, Sacramento is a <i>metropolitan university</i>.</b> Metropolitan universities are responsive to diverse community needs. Thus, we combine research-based learning with practical application and create partnerships with external organizations to resolve complex metropolitan problems. We educate students to become informed and actively engaged members of society.</p>	<p><b>As a metropolitan university, we value:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Informed, Engaged Society</li> <li>• Lifelong Learning</li> <li>• Community Enhancing and Supportive Learning, Scholarship, and Creative Activity</li> <li>• Advancing the Interests and Goals of the Greater Sacramento Metropolitan Region</li> <li>• Serving as a Cultural Resource</li> </ul>
<p><b>California State University, Sacramento is increasingly a <i>destination campus</i>.</b> Destination campuses are attractive for their programs and opportunities, and for their role as a part of the regional culture. Thus, we invite students, faculty, staff, alumni, and other members of the community to participate together in campus life. We are and will increasingly be a source of regional pride, a place visited often and mentioned frequently and positively.</p>	<p><b>As a destination campus, we value:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being Located in California's Capital</li> <li>• Excellent and Distinctive Programs</li> <li>• A Vibrant Campus Life</li> <li>• Leadership and Civic Engagement</li> <li>• A Welcoming, Supportive Campus Community</li> <li>• A Beautiful, Up-to-date and Sustainable Physical Environment</li> </ul>

## Becoming Strategic and Establishing Priorities

A sense of mission, vision, and values (“Who are we?”) provides a backdrop for, but does not lead directly to, successful strategic planning. A sense of context or environment (“What are our challenges and opportunities?”) is also critical to productive strategic plans.

Strategic planning’s origins lie within the business sector, but its practice is also well established in public and non-profit organizations. Strategic planning recognizes that the fundamental purpose of an organization – in our case, to educate students – is not likely to change over time. Yet, it also recognizes that the organization’s environment or context changes often. Thus, organizations cannot succeed simply by adhering to the same formulae and behaviors year after year.

Through strategic planning, an organization seeks systematically to achieve a grounded understanding of its environment and then, based upon this understanding, to set “strategic” mid-term (3-5 year) goals or priorities that help the organization achieve its purpose within the current environment. The most common and effective method for initiating a strategic planning process is the SWOT analysis whereby planners identify the Strengths and Weaknesses of the organization and the Opportunities and Threats within its environment. SPC conducted a SWOT analysis, the results of which reflect challenges and opportunities that are shared by many other institutions nationally. The SWOT results are available at [www.csus.edu/spc](http://www.csus.edu/spc).

## Identifying Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities emerge naturally from a SWOT analysis. The overlap of internal weaknesses and external threats shapes the organization’s highest priorities, directing resources toward situations that, if not addressed, could threaten the organization. The ability to leverage internal strengths against external opportunities creates a second set of priorities that, if addressed expediently, should benefit the organization.

By their very nature, prioritized goals are narrowly defined and focused; they cannot and should not reflect every aspect of work that occurs within a complex organization. Too many priorities cause a loss of focus. Nor are prioritized strategic goals simply a restatement of an organization’s mission.

Rather, strategic priorities address situations that are either exceptionally threatening or exceptionally promising in the short term. SPC’s SWOT analysis indicates that we face serious challenges and are afforded some promising opportunities. Pursuit of those priorities does not suggest that the organization’s many other goals and activities are ignored, though they may receive less attention while prioritized goals take center stage. In other words, when trade-offs must be made, strategic priorities matter most. Typically, trade-offs occur within a budgeting context whereby a well-grounded plan helps drive decisions about allocating resources. As Sacramento State begins to address its budget situation, our strategic priorities will become especially central.

## Recommended Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Successful implementation of the *Strategic Plan* will require strong leadership and direction as well as the commitment and participation of the entire campus community, but the actual authority to implement the *Plan*’s various elements rests with the president and his cabinet, not SPC. By virtue of its charge, SPC is an advisory body. In that capacity, SPC will:

- Provide consultation regarding the development and implementation of the *Strategic Plan* during the initial stages of its implementation.
- In March of each year, beginning in 2008, provide the president with a report of its observations regarding implementation and achievement of the University’s strategic goals. The report will be made public.
- By March of 2010, advise the president regarding the need and timing of the next revision of the *Strategic Plan*.
- Meet regularly with the membership of the University Budget Advisory Committee to discuss progress on

implementation of the *Strategic Plan* and its implications for budget decisions.

SPC further recommends attention to the following:

- Clear delineation of responsibility for achieving the goals identified in the *Strategic Plan*.
- An implementation process that encourages meaningful collaboration among campus divisions.
- Regular opportunities for feedback from the campus community

## Strategic Priorities

Unquestionably, Sacramento State's primary purpose is: ***Achieving ever-higher levels of student learning and academic excellence while optimizing student access and success.***

Keeping in mind the overarching University purpose, the following five priorities encompass the most critical challenges and promising opportunities for our campus within a three-to-five year timeframe. Of the five, the first three priorities address what SPC considers, in order of importance, the greatest immediate challenges to moving our institution forward and permitting us best to achieve our primary purpose in the longer run. The remaining two, roughly equal in importance, are conceptualized as major opportunities that should be embraced and will also further our primary purpose.

The five priorities are stated broadly below. They are followed by more specific goal statements. The goals will foster direct implementation plans and their outcomes will be measured.

### 1. Implement a strategically focused, campus-wide effort to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates

- Foster a culture whereby recruitment, retention, graduation, and student success in all its forms are embraced and pursued as the responsibility of the entire campus community—faculty, staff, students, and alumni.
- Enhance and better integrate current campus efforts to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.
- Develop undergraduate and graduate recruitment targets that reflect a sustainable balance of academic excellence, access, demand, systematically managed growth, workforce development, and campus capacity.
- Achieve a 6-year graduation rate of 46% (currently at 41%) for first-time freshmen and a 4-year graduation rate of 62% (currently at 57%) for transfer students by 2012–13.
- Set appropriate goals for graduation rates and time-to-degree-completion for our graduate programs.

*Rationale:* Institutional success is contingent in large part upon attracting, retaining, and graduating students. While we are increasing the applicant pool, enrollment is at best steady. Enrollment is the major determinant of our campus's general funds. Rather than make educated guesses about what our enrollment numbers—and, by extension, our budget—will look like in future years, we must manage enrollment in ways that are both educationally and fiscally responsible. Toward that end, we must recruit students and then enhance the retention and graduation rates of all who choose to enroll here. We must also recognize that our efforts to attract, retain and graduate students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels depend on the creation of a positive learning environment that fosters academic and personal growth.

### 2. Create and sustain an organizational structure and culture that facilitates evidence-based decision-making and purposeful planning in all important endeavors.

- Develop and utilize unit-level measures of progress for critical unit functions that further the mission of the University.
- Use student learning and program assessment data to shape decisions about program and service enhancements and/or modifications.
- Engage colleges and departments in coordinated, data-driven academic planning processes.

*Rationale:* To serve our students and our community in the most productive and transparent way, we must generate and disseminate useful data. The analyses of the data must then be directed to the improvement of the programs, services, and functions of our academic and administrative units.

### 3. Enhance campus-wide engagement in and responsibility for the resolution of complex issues and in the planning and implementation of campus policies.

- Develop a campus culture that exhibits respect for all members of the campus community.
- Develop a campus-wide understanding of the higher education environment in which we operate.
- Implement effective communication channels across all levels of the campus.
- Foster active and constructive participation in campus decision making across all constituent groups.

*Rationale:* Our ability to accomplish campus goals and to meet our many challenges rests upon our ability to identify and solve problems collectively, to strengthen our shared values as a community. The many constituent groups on campus must achieve at least *general* agreement concerning our goals and the processes by which they are derived and implemented. The discourse and debate may be spirited and even lengthy, but the underlying assumption of integrity and accountability of the participants is essential. Openness, transparency, and the use of evidence-based inquiry into problems and potential solutions are critical to meeting this objective.

#### 4. Build a creative and vibrant learning community derived from the strength and vitality of our diverse campus.

- Foster an inclusive environment that stimulates ongoing, civil dialogue to address the evolving complexity and diversity in our region and on our campus.
- Develop curricular and co-curricular programming that builds upon the diversity of the campus and the region.

*Rationale:* Since our campus reflects and contributes to the highly diverse “New California,” we recognize the possibilities and challenges of our different, multiple experiences and perspectives. We therefore see our diversity as a unique opportunity to nourish and sustain a dynamic learning community.

#### 5. Identify and develop interdisciplinary and cross-divisional initiatives with the greatest potential to strengthen our role as an engaged partner in the region.

- Identify areas of need for University growth and development in partnership with the regional community.
- To the greatest extent possible, emphasize the University’s location in and ties to the state’s capital, and take fullest advantage of resources that accompany Sacramento’s designation as the state capital.
- Prioritize and assess new and ongoing regionally based University initiatives prior to allocation of University resources to other such initiatives.

*Rationale:* Our many advisory committees, regional chambers of commerce, arts and cultural associations, professional organizations and government entities within the Sacramento Region have made clear that they wish us to be a regional resource as well as to provide an excellent education. We have a tremendous opportunity and the potential to be a full and *active partner* in regional social, cultural and economic development. To do so, we must focus our energies and choices to maximize our impact as a partner. To the extent that we can respond to increasingly complex regional issues and needs in ways that involve multiple sectors of the University, we enhance the institution’s connection to the region.

