

**PRE STRATEGIC PLANNING:
THEMES AND GOALS
September 25, 2013**

In May 2013, President Gonzalez charged a working group drawn from the faculty, staff and administration to develop a document that framed and described important strategic themes for the campus.* Building on the existing strategic plan as well as summer discussions and team research, the following document describes important features of California State University, Sacramento's context and provides some strategic discussion themes that have a potential role future of the campus.

The team began with an assessment of the major themes and commitments in the University's mission and then refined and enhanced the values statement developed in the previous planning effort. From that point, team members researched and analyzed the primary context issues confronting the campus. We then turned our attention to considering strategic themes in the following areas:

1. What strategies will support our core identity? We defined our core identity as the central passions of the University. These are the features of the University that demonstrate our mission, core values, and identity.
2. What strategies will support the resource base needed for the long-term health and success of the University? We defined resource strategies as those that supported our brand, financial health, time, and energy.
3. What strategies ensure excellence? The discussion in this area focused on signature programs, events, and directions that demonstrate the unique value, importance, and quality of the institution.

Mission:

The full text of the University's mission can found at <http://www.csus.edu/about/mission.html>. For the purposes of this document, we focused on the central themes of the statement, which can be distilled into the following paragraph:

California State University, Sacramento commits itself to providing access to a timely degree 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 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.

Core Values:

California State University, Sacramento will be known throughout and increasingly beyond the Sacramento Region for its excellent and comprehensive academic, experiential, and co-curricular student programs. The University will be a key partner in developing the highly diverse "New California" and our graduates will be prepared to enter the workforce and participate as civically engaged members of the region.

We will recruit the best faculty and staff that are innovative and utilize the best in teaching and learning strategies and technologies that promote a "real world" and engaged educational experience. We adapt to student and regional needs. We will be recognized as a beautiful and inviting regional destination that serves as a regional center. We will be a source of pride for and

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increasingly enjoy the support of the Greater Sacramento Region.

Environmental Assessment:

Where do we stand now? Since the last strategic plan was adopted, disruptive technologies, public scrutiny and demand for accountability, student preparation and need, as well as escalating costs have shaped higher education contexts in significant ways. Much of the team's environmental analysis focused on how these issues affect the campus as we consider possible approaches for addressing these issues.

Strengths:

Sacramento State offers a great deal to our region and our faculty, staff and students can be proud of many things. The following are some of the significant highlights and strengths of our University.

- Students appreciate the strength of their Sac State experience. Most report positively that their education here was an important part of their growth and development personally and professionally.
- The University strives to be a diverse and accessible campus representative of the region and mission. The university works to meet student needs and goals.
- Our University celebrates cultural and ethnic diversity in ways that draw the community and region together. Campus events, curriculum, and programs attract people to our campus and our outreach into the region engages us with the life and energy of Northern California.
- There is a growing sense of pride and regional recognition of Sac State's worth and value to culture, economy, and Greater Sacramento community. This sense includes both an accessible and beautiful campus as well as our reach into Northern California with the preparation we give our students and the contributions of our faculty and staff.
- We deliver a strong and varied curriculum with excellent efficiency. Our cost per student for instructional delivery is among the best in the CSU. We strive to provide enough courses to support student learning goals.
- Our faculty and staff are committed to the success of the University and our students. Our people represent the core of our success and their commitment to our students and region is a significant strength.
- We offer strong support services for student success. From advising to workshops to co-curricular activities, we provide students with opportunities to explore and develop in and out of the classroom.

Weaknesses:

The university has worked hard to improve its programs, operating systems, student support, and facilities over the past several years. Even so, there are identifiable weaknesses that should be addressed in the upcoming plan. Some of these include:

- Our low graduation rates. More than half our students take longer than six years to complete their programs. As a result, student loans, cost of living, and other debt add to long-term costs that may limit students' abilities and future.
- Our curriculum is slow to update and adapt. While there are pockets of excellence and areas of significant success, generally our programs have not taken full advantage of the technologies available or regional opportunities.
- Understandably, departments and majors have tended to focus on students who wish to pursue a career in their discipline or earn a graduate degree. Many students, however, may have different goals. They may seek flexible degree paths that could support a variety of career choices. They may need to complete a BA or MA degree to support an existing career choice. And, for some, time to degree may be the most significant factor in earning a degree

at all. Generally, we have not designed programs or curricula intended to help students meet these goals.

- Often, we have not designed programs or schedules that support student success when and where it is needed. Course schedules, bottlenecks, and degree designs often do not focus on providing access for working students, students with family commitments, or students who may incur additional debt to complete their degree. Few degrees can be completed outside of regular business hours. Bottlenecks may slow progress and large degree programs may mean students take more than six years to complete. While our efficiency is good (cost per FTES), our cost to degree is relatively high.
- Our educational infrastructure is improving, but remains weak. We have improved classroom space markedly although we have been slow to align room size with curriculum. Our library media center retains many VHS tapes and has not completely upgraded to DVD or better. Many labs and classrooms require improved technology infrastructure. Classroom technologies and ability to effectively mount on-line programming remain relatively weak.
- Administrative systems are outdated. The university remains a largely paper-based institution with paper forms used for purchasing, contracts, travel and other similar systems. These are slow and inefficient. Add/Drop forms and student support systems are paper-based and require students to physically walk from location to location. We have not effectively instituted systems that allow students to have “one stop” service areas to support advising, financial aid, registration management, or other high service approaches to supporting learning. Most of the existing systems do not allow on-line access.

Opportunities:

The university has moved strategically over the past ten years to create an environment and infrastructure that may be able to take advantage of regional and demographic opportunities that are likely to present themselves over the next decade. These include:

- Strong political pressures for education to succeed in cost-effective and student-centric ways. Increasing demand for well-prepared workforce and projected growth in CSU enrollment lead to an appreciation for the vital role Sac State can play with students throughout Northern California. The new chancellor, as well as the governor, has spoken about the critical needs of the State and having a well-educated workforce prepared to support and propel California’s economy.
- We enjoy and benefit from an excellent location. Because we are in the capital city of California and we have tremendous access to regional opportunities ranging from politics to tourism to culture to name a few. The city and region are growing, our location and identity as the only public four-year institution is an important asset. There are many potential partnerships regionally as the region, increasingly, becomes a destination for employment, arts, culture, agriculture, tourism, and business.
- Discussions about an “Affordable Care Act” approach for education underscores national interest in supporting a move away from high cost, inefficient delivery systems and toward efficient, accessible, and affordable education. There are opportunities for innovation, grant and gift support, and technology to enhance the ways in which a degree can be earned.
- Technology and innovation will support new platforms for teaching and learning. On-line, hybrid, and face-to-face interactions will change. Content marketplaces will provide “on-demand” learning and content opportunities that allow teachers and students to create customized learning experiences. Future students will be better prepared to take advantage of these opportunities as will a new generation of faculty and staff.
- Our location provides us with rich opportunities for employing high impact learning practices including internships, service learning, global education, and student faculty research projects. Our strong community relationships provide us with partnership opportunities that can support these initiatives.

- Strong student demand (CSU expects significant growth over next 10 years) will provide opportunities for the university to grow dramatically—physically and virtually. Many students will have significant experience with on-line learning platforms with an estimated 50-80% having background with hybrid, total on-line, and tablet learning. Students across state and national borders will have access to same or comparable courses.

Threats:

There are environmental considerations that the University has no control over yet have the potential to undermine its mission and values. These include:

- College costs will continue to escalate creating a student debt “bubble” that undermines the economy. At the same time, state funding is likely to represent a shrinking part of student support requiring students (or other) to make up the difference. Sufficient resource support (structural deficits, waning commitment to fully support public higher education) means that this course is unlikely to change.
- Higher education funding models are poised to change. There is regional and national interest in changing funding formula from “fee for service” and toward “fee for outcome.” This change represents a significant upheaval in our current understanding of success as well as how we educate students.
- The “marketplace” is competitive in Sacramento (Drexel, For Profits, Colorado State University, CCCs, MOOCs). Community college decision-making and alignment with our curriculum does not always complement our mission and values.
- Large numbers of students who need learning support will enter the CSU. Developing systems to help prepare and support first generation, non-native English speakers, students from low-income districts among others need to be developed and implemented.
- There is a public perception that higher education is expensive, takes too long to complete, and has diminishing value for the dollars invested. More and more, people begin to think less of higher education as a public good and more as a private good.
- Annual and unpredictable budgeting methods make long-term planning difficult. Uncertainty undermines innovation and experimentation and can cause overly cautious responses.

Strategic Themes:

The committee’s discussion of themes divided into three spheres: Core Identity, Resources, and Excellence. Whatever plan emerges from this process, there is a strong sense among committee members that core mission-based, identity elements should be featured as foundational toward designing pathways into the next decade. The success of any plan requires an alignment of resources. Although state support is unlikely to keep pace with costs, managing brand, time, and technology effectively may create an environment that diversifies resource possibilities. Finally, the committee recognized the importance of establishing clear signatures that are public, visible, and exciting to demonstrate the value of public education and Sac State.

Core Identity (our values, mission, purpose, passions). Some features and aspirations of university and its community reflect our core understanding of our mission and ourselves. These include:

- An integrated, coherent, and effective curriculum. We recognize that our curriculum and programs need to serve all of our students from those who aspire to professional degrees, to those that wish to continue their studies in graduate programs, to students who seek to live and work in our region in ways that may or may not have direct ties with their discipline. Many of our students work and most use student loans to support their education. Therefore, to streamline their experience we recommend that the university works to develop:

- Clear thematic pathways through the curriculum that are adapted to student outcomes and goals.
 - Cohort-based scheduling and programming that recognizes our students work and have outside commitments.
 - Common core, block scheduling, and asynchronous learning opportunities that support our students' diverse needs and abilities.
 - An integrated co-curricular experiences to meet the different developmental levels of our students
 - Customizable, low-unit degrees centered on student learning goals.
 - Practices and procedures that are consistent across the university.
- A focus on student success (completion rates, satisfactory progress, outcomes assessment, and grades). We recognize that students come to us from many different backgrounds and with varying skills and abilities. Our goal is to help them achieve the level of education they need for success in their work, family, and civic lives. To accomplish this, we should focus on:
 - Greater attention to transfer student success and connections with California's community colleges.
 - Developing and implementing shared learning goals and assessment processes across curricular and co-curricular programming. Our regional constituents and partners should be involved in this process.
 - High impact teaching learning practices and experiences (internships, service learning, global education, and student/faculty research). Every student should have a requirement to engage in one or more of these practices.
 - The recognition and use of our location—Sacramento State has place-based opportunities as the “Capital” campus. We are in a unique location with unique opportunities afforded us by virtue of place. These include:
 - Turning the “only game in town” into an opportunity for strength and ‘sizzle’ through strategic partnerships, working as a “hot shop” or “incubator” for regional development and student engagement.
 - Identifying and capitalizing on Sacramento's inherent strengths to design strategic partnerships and collaborations that could have a strong and immediate impact both on the campus and in the region (e.g. “Farm to Fork/Table” movement).
 - Design place-based learning opportunities, programs and curriculum. Design ways of using the campus and region for learning with the potential for cross-disciplinary connections, first year or senior year seminars, and strengthening campus and community unity.
 - Develop strategies for moving from the regional to the global. What are the best approaches for using our strengths as a springboard toward global connections (cultural, economic, entertainment)? We should consider developing a campus without borders. For instance, the One World project focuses on themes such as water or migration. How can we create a year of exchange, programs, lectures, and study away that support the theme?

Resources (time, money and brand). To accomplish our objectives we recognize the need to support and sustain important initiatives. We, therefore, should focus on developing strategies related to resources development and diversity:

- Create diverse array of student incentives for success. The corollary should be to consider how we have created barriers to success or incentives that inhibit student success.
 - Success is more quantifiable than quality. “Is it good?” is harder to measure than “did you achieve your goal?” Create clear outcomes to define student and institutional success. Benchmarks and progress indicators are important.
 - Focus on student goals. Success is broader than graduation. Some students may

- need certifications or alternative programs that do not necessarily mean getting a degree.
 - Create streamlined “reentry” programs that allow students who have “stopped out” for a year or more to reenter the university and complete their degree program.
- Developing a diverse resource base including alumni, grants and contracts, short-term/long-term programs, use of the facilities for more than academic projects.
- Expanding the size of our student body in ways that do not dramatically increase demand on facilities and classroom sizes (7 day schedule, increased use of hybrid and on-line).
- Expanding the number of non-resident students.
- Developing auxiliaries and diversifying revenue streams—build on current successes.
- Institutionalizing data center for decision-making that can provide a warehouse for resources and support for evidence-based decision-making.
- Create a common, rational budgeting process that is clear and transparent with a shared set of assumptions, procedures, and methods that can be used across the campus.
- Support development of stronger faculty and staff advising core to guide students through their programs—an equivalent of “Genius Bar” advising with experts accessible in tiers from automated FAQs through face to face. Computer-aided degree audits along with 24-7 advising and support could strengthen degree completion outcomes.
- Improve infrastructure. The physical and virtual infrastructures should be aligned with curriculum development. Classroom technologies, streaming abilities, lecture-capture, podcasting, upgraded and updated labs are essential for successful implementation of the curriculum.
- As many systems as possible should be automated and paperless.

Excellence (What are our signatures that we can do better than any other campus in the CSU? What will we be known for?) Beyond achieving our mission, certain facets of the university aspire to be recognized for the best practices in and the best examples of. These are our aspirational strategies that differentiate us from any other CSUs (and other universities) that we will become known for broadly.

- Curriculum should be developed to supplement the existing majors and professional degree programs. New pathways should focus on providing students with lower unit, high value options that allow them to select a level of education aligned with their goals. Some possible approaches include:
 - Flexible degree paths. Each college should offer one, low unit framework degree (24-36 units) option. These degree paths should provide a low-unit framework that can stand alone as a major and allow students to add on endorsements or certificates to meet particular goals. Degrees should be expandable with room for post graduate “endorsements” or certificates that help alumni remain current as well as connected to the university.
 - We should investigate and design a general education major.
 - We should implement a catalog of “endorsements” or certificates that could be completed with or without a degree program to provide customized and focused access points. These should be designed to be nimble, meet regional needs and interests, and support customizable degrees.

- Every student should be able to graduate with at least one high-impact experience (student/faculty research, internship, service learning, global education).
 - That we guarantee at least one pathway through each college that allows students to complete a BA in 4 years (assuming 8 semesters at 15 units each semester).
 - Every student should have a first year experience (or transfer experience) and a senior capstone that should be associated with high impact learning practices.
 - The university should commit to at least some “debt free” options wherein qualified resident student can complete a degree without the need for loans (the programs should be funded entirely or mostly on state support levels)
 - 75% of our students should complete their degrees in 6 years or less.
- New and enhanced student success infrastructure. We have many systems in place now that support students and we have pockets of excellence. We suggest building a centralized clearinghouse, easy to navigate, and ready to meet student needs in the following areas:
 - Support for first generation families through bilingual advising, instruction, and programs.
 - Develop active advising programs that identify students at risk to retain them as well as students who have “stopped out” to help them complete.
 - Develop stronger uses of technology to support student achievement, learning on demand, and degree completion. Develop an e-portfolio system to support student learning, program customization, and outcome-based assessment.
- Continue to develop a regional sense of value and pride in the University. Building on the work of University Advancement and Public Affairs and Advocacy, the University should continue and enhance its regional campaign of value creation as a means of supporting an environment to create more of a self-sustaining resource base that are less reliant on state resources.
 - Develop campus leadership and decision-making abilities that allow for more local decisions (department, program level) with less centralization. Foster systems that support external and community engagement with University support.
 - Actively involve alumni and work to develop a culture of “giving back.”
 - Develop systems to support conversations to enhance the value we offer to our region. These could include on-going faculty programs that support pedagogy conversations, curriculum development, and scholarship.
- Transform the library into the “intellectual hub” of the campus. The University should commit itself toward building a true information/learning commons with support for faculty research, student research advising and access, and developing information literacy. The space should include “smart” access to learning resources, webcasts, and videoconferencing. Features could include:
 - Student learning support/coaching/mentoring. Mentoring center.
 - Home of assessment and learning outcomes. Focus on teaching, developing connected curriculum. Discussions of pedagogy, best practices, and learning approaches.
 - Faculty teaching support. Aimed at developing courses and support for new hires, lecturers, and part-time people.
 - Learning spaces for group and discussion work, projects, cross-disciplinary spaces.
 - Academic data warehouse with support for decision-making (administrative and curricular).
 - Curriculum support with assistants and librarians able to work to facilitate syllabi, learning outcomes, and collection development.

Conversations over the summer were productive and the supporting documentation and subsequent discussion produced some areas of true potential. Some of the themes listed here are already being

developed and piloted. Others are further away. But all of the discussions we had focused on one important central premise—what do our students need to be successful. We hope this document provides a springboard for the next steps.