

***DRAFT***

**ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2004-2009**

**SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

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**MAY 2004**

**WORKING DRAFT SCSU Academic Strategic Plan for COMMENT**

*This document integrates (1) the drafts of the Academic Vice President’s Cabinet (formerly known as the Deans’ Council) (Version 2.6) and the Faculty Academic Strategic Planning Committee (FASP) as brought forward to the Academic Plan Steering Committee and (2) discussions at meetings of the Cabinet and Academic Strategic Plan Steering Committee . It is put forward as a working draft for comment by the University community.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Southern Connecticut State University has a long history of educating Connecticut students in the liberal arts and for careers in education, business, health, human services, library science, and a wide range of occupations. As a public service institution, Southern has a critical responsibility to advance knowledge in individual and collective contexts in an atmosphere of academic freedom.

This Academic Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 charts an ambitious course for fulfilling Southern's academic vision and mission (Section II). We seek continued improvement in academic programs, faculty excellence, student achievement and the essential supports for our academic enterprise—administrative systems, library and information technology resources, and physical facilities and equipment.

Southern has come a long way since it's founding as New Haven State Teacher's College in 1893. Today, Southern is a comprehensive university serving over 12,000 students in 115 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in both arts and sciences and professional studies. In 2002, the Board of Governors of Higher Education in Connecticut approved Southern's first Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership. In addition, Southern offers various non-credit educational programming.

Southern educates students from many cultures at many stages of their lives. Half of all course credits are still earned by fulltime undergraduate students. Most graduate students attend Southern on a part time basis, accounting for a growing share of all students. Approximately 4,000 graduate students are matriculated in graduate programs. Of this number 944 were enrolled full-time for Fall Semester 2003.

### **Process to Prepare the Academic Strategic Plan**

The Academic Strategic Plan was developed through discussions over the last three years between and among the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the **Academic Vice President's Cabinet**, and the Faculty Academic Strategic Planning Committee. These efforts accelerated in fall 2003 in order to present the Academic Strategic Plan to the incoming President in 2004. Other divisions of the university were invited to comment once a draft Plan was completed, and those comments are reflected in the Plan.

The Strategic Planning process posed the following questions:

- How have external factors affected higher education, and specifically public higher education?
- What are the future trends that will affect SCSU?
- How have internal factors affected Southern and the CSU system?
- What does Southern have to do in the near- and long-term to continue to improve its academic programming, and ensure institutional growth and student success?

This Plan is a living document. It seeks to guide and channel the ambitions and energies of many talented people within a complex organization that is the modern university. While it sets a firm course toward excellence in all aspects of the academic mission of the university, it will be adjusted as conditions change or new opportunities arise.

After presenting the Vision and Mission (Section II), Core Values and Principles (Section III), and Context (Section IV), the Plan establishes a comprehensive set of Goals and Strategies for achieving them (Section V). Specific objectives and milestones associated with each strategy are included in Appendix 1. Section VI discusses financing the Plan and Section VII presents the implementation mechanisms.

## **II. Vision and Mission**

### **Vision for the Academic Strategic Plan**

Southern Connecticut State University will provide students with excellent instruction and outstanding educational opportunities facilitated by a superior faculty committed to creative and scholarly work, dedicated to quality teaching, and engaged in the campus and wider community. Students will have a broad liberal education. The course work that is required in academic programs will integrate the creation and acquisition of knowledge with the acquisition of skills and the ability to reason critically. Southern will promote and support excellence in graduate education, as evidenced by the quality of scholarship, research, and collective impact of its graduates on society. All graduates will meet challenging scholastic and professional requirements that empower them to think rationally and creatively and to transmit and apply this knowledge to the community.

### **Mission**

Southern Connecticut State University is committed to constructing and maintaining an environment conducive to the creation, advancement, transmission, critique and preservation of knowledge by faculty and students. As a public institution, Southern is dedicated to the education of undergraduates in the liberal arts and in professional programs. As the leader of advanced study in the CSU system, SCSU is committed to the professional preparation of graduate learners for success in their careers and in service to their communities, including applied doctoral programs consistent with our historical mission. To this end, the University will emphasize and support excellence in the integration of research, teaching and creative activity. The University will also foster a culture that forges dynamic connections among academic disciplines.

## **III. Values and Core Principles**

The Academic Strategic Plan is grounded in the Values and Core Principles of Southern Connecticut State University. The Plan:

- Is driven by a strong academic vision. Southern strives to promote academic excellence in teaching, learning and knowledge creation in the context of a strong commitment to academic freedom. Academic considerations should drive all operational planning, including facilities and student services.
- Reflects Southern's distinctive role in Connecticut's higher education system. The integration of scholarship and teaching distinguishes Southern from both community colleges and research universities.

- Reflects Southern's role as the flagship of graduate education in the Connecticut State University System and its commitment to the professional preparation of graduate learners for success in their careers and in service to their communities, including applied doctoral programs consistent with our historic mission.
- Uses data to support the achievement of this academic vision, stressing the ongoing use of assessment data for decision-making.
- Promotes diversity of all kinds among students, faculty, and the community.
- Reflects a commitment to international and global awareness.
- Reflects the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and creative activity.
- Promotes community service. Southern is an engaged partner in improving the Connecticut community through its teaching, research and community service.
- Aligns governance to achieve our goals.
- Meets statutory requirements and acknowledges the ethical obligations owed to the community and other external stakeholders.

#### **IV. Plan Context**

The Academic Strategic Plan sets out ambitious goals for the University to provide outstanding liberal arts education and graduate programs of excellence, promoting a vital intellectual culture. Southern builds on a long tradition of educating Connecticut students. Southern recently underwent a self-assessment and re-accreditation review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. In 2001, the NEASC Commission accepted the Southern accreditation report following a focused evaluation, and in 2003 extended accreditation to the Doctoral Degree-Granting Level.

Southern Connecticut is moving forward on many fronts. Appendix 2 presents extensive data on current initiatives and operations of the university as context for the Plan. It describes an institution with a growing enrollment, increasingly selective admissions, a strong faculty, progress in numerous learning, research, and community service initiatives, and a campus undergoing substantial rebuilding.

Yet fiscal constraints and rising tuition pose threats to the university.

To remain competitive, Southern must address a number of critical challenges:

- Continue to hire, retain, and support the best faculty and maintain competitive student-faculty ratios.
- Continue to improve program offerings and the student experience, including better advisement and improved support services.
- Communicate the benefits of a Southern education to prospective students, parents and the community.
- Recruit increasingly qualified students, including maintaining and expanding financial aid.

- Continue to grow graduate programs as demanded by students and the regional economy.
- Address the diverse learning needs of students at all levels.
- Maintain an up-to-date information technology infrastructure.
- Increase grant, contract and donor revenues to support faculty and student research and creative activity as well as program quality enhancements.
- Achieve a state funding formula that recognizes the increasing proportion of part time and older students as the labor market demands more lifelong learning and workers balance the needs of work, education, and family.
- Continue to refine Southern’s shared governance system to ensure implementation of the Plan.

This Academic Strategic Plan provides a basis for the SCSU community to join together and focus its efforts on identifying and achieving the most important priorities for change that will ensure an intellectually vibrant and highly productive future for our institution.

## **V. Goals, Strategies and Objectives**

The Plan establishes nine goals for advancing the academic mission of Southern Connecticut State University – seven academic goals and two supporting goals. For each goal, the key strategies are identified. Specific objectives and milestones associated with each strategy are included in Appendix 1.

In order to provide the quality education that will attract and retain motivated students, Southern must support academic programs and a faculty that will both challenge and prepare students for their future endeavors. Programs must be designed to engage students, attract and retain a dynamic and creative faculty, and meet the needs of a changing society as well as the requirements of the appropriate accrediting institutions. Strong programs cannot thrive without a motivated faculty which is supported in its teaching and creative pursuits by the administration. Dynamic programs and engaged faculty that provide students with the opportunity to learn, apply and participate in the creation of knowledge will ensure the future of our academic enterprise.

Southern must also improve the array of support systems and facilities that enable the realization of these driving goals and objectives. The whole must in the end be financially sustainable in a time of tremendous fiscal challenges and increasing economic pressures on families and individuals.

### **Academic Goals for Southern Connecticut State University**

1. Enhance and promote a culture of excellence in scholarship, creativity and teaching.
2. Improve the quality and coherence of all academic programs.
3. Attract, retain and support a diverse faculty who are strong teachers, scholars and participants in the life of the University and in the wider community.
4. Improve the learning experience and achievement of students.
5. Attract and retain a highly qualified, economically and culturally diverse student population.
6. Seek limited growth in enrollment to meet public needs and support continuous improvement of academic quality.
7. Expand and enhance library and information technology resources.

### **Goals in Support of Academic Goals**

8. Improve all support services to enhance the academic mission and functions of the University.
9. Maintain an attractive, environmentally appropriate campus that enhances the educational experience and encourages social interaction.

Finally, it is important to note that this Plan was developed within the context of the Connecticut State University and previous Southern Connecticut State University Strategic Plans and the requirements of the contract between the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The plan expresses the academic vision and direction for the University with the realization that this direction will be carried out within the structures and processes embodied in the university's administrative and budget procedures.

### ***Academic Goals***

<b>1. Enhance and promote a culture of excellence in scholarship, creativity and teaching.</b>
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Southern Connecticut State University, as part of its central academic mission, seeks to foster a dynamic intellectual/scholarly ethos that will permeate our academic community.

The University's faculty is integral to the creation, advancement, transmission, critique and preservation of knowledge. Accordingly Southern is committed to providing appropriate support for a distinguished faculty that strives for excellence in the integration of teaching and scholarly activity. The appropriate support of faculty scholarly, creative and curricular activity is central to the University's achievement of its academic vision and mission. Such academic support of faculty must be a central strategic priority for the academic strategic plan. The faculty will thereby achieve excellence in the integration of research and teaching. The faculty will be further empowered to prepare students to complete their academic studies and degrees to the best of their abilities.

The strategies outlined for achieving this goal and its associated objectives are both ambitious and essential to the University's aspirations of academic improvement.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **1.1 Develop a rich array of interdisciplinary programs to share research, promote exchange of ideas, and enrich the academic experience on campus.**

Southern will encourage all programs and faculty to build a content-rich, engaged and challenging learning environment at Southern, and to develop and support a culture of research and scholarship amongst the faculty and students by supporting the exchange and interrogation of ideas that are crucial to teaching and research.

Specific actions include:

- Sponsor university-wide lectures; departmental, school and university-wide colloquia and interdisciplinary conferences; and annual thematic interdisciplinary conferences and support course innovations to facilitate interaction among faculty in all schools.
- Encourage dialogue among and within disciplines through visiting professorships, interdisciplinary programs, and initiatives.

The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will work with the Deans and Department Chairs or Program Directors to develop measures to promote and support these activities, to track the activities and to evaluate their quality and outcomes.

**1.2 Expand resources and organizational mechanisms to support faculty research, scholarship, creativity and service.**

Faculty hired since 1998 have arrived with the clear expectation that they engage in meaningful research or other creative activity. With the increasing competition for employment on university faculties and Southern's desire to expand creative activity and faculty engagement generally, this expectation is reasonable. However, faculty leaders have expressed concern about the combined effects of a standard 12 credit teaching load and the relative paucity of both direct funding for research or related activities (e.g. travel to conferences) and support or release time to secure outside funding to support faculty research and creative endeavors.

Southern will work to expand both demand for and supply of the array of supports for faculty research, creative and community service activities through collaborative efforts with the Office of Institutional Advancement. Recently SCSU institutionalized the Junior Faculty Research Fellowship and Junior Faculty Teaching Fellowship through which faculty secure 9 hours of release time to pursue their research or teaching activities.

Specific measures include:

- Increase the pool of reassigned time that is made available for peer-reviewed research or creative projects that further both individual research interests and Southern's mission and reputation, contingent on securing new resources.
- Create an SCSU competitive research grant program with external resources to supplement resources available through CSU research grants.
- Increase grants for curriculum innovation.
- Increase support for travel for research, attendance and participation at conferences.
- Increase support for Academic Events and related activities.

Accomplishing these strategies will require an increase in school-level and faculty-driven individual and collaborative fund development efforts. This will require an increased level of support from the Office of Institutional Advancement for a range of programs and from Sponsored Programs and Research (SPAR) in assisting faculty in identifying sources of external funding and in the preparation, submission and management of grants (see Section VI).

**Measuring Research, Creative Activity, and Community Service.** The Vice President for Academic Affairs will work with the Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty representatives to undertake a creative, intensive effort to develop longitudinal data on faculty activity in the areas of research and creative endeavors, professional activities, and community service. The approach must recognize the individualized and diverse nature of faculty activity, along with emerging roles and skill sets. After a baseline is established, the data will enable measurement of the impact of the Plan and the setting of future expectations across individual faculty members, programs, and schools.

**2. Improve the quality and coherence of all academic programs.**

Southern organizes its academic program across six schools at three levels: (1) the **General Education** program grounded in the liberal arts; (2) a system of **Undergraduate Majors**; and (3) **Graduate Programs** including master's degrees, advanced certificates for professionals, and a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership.

## **Foundation in the Liberal Arts**

Undergraduate education requires a general education program grounded in the liberal arts. This program provides the foundation of learning and prepares students to think creatively and critically, to analyze and solve problems, to express their ideas clearly, to apply ethical judgment and to instill the values of life long learning and the desire to contribute to a diverse world. This requires broad-based interdisciplinary knowledge of the physical and cultural world and awareness of the intellectual tools through which knowledge is produced.

To emphasize the conviction that knowledge transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, a general education program must have a coherent interdisciplinary focus that requires students to pursue an educational path that interconnects their course work. This program, logically organized, provides for the progressive intellectual development and growth of students and prepares them for specialized learning in their disciplines. The Committee on General Education is working to improve this component of Southern's program.

The University is committed to pedagogical programs and structures that encourage interdisciplinary collaborations. The University facilitates encounters between and among the disciplines in order to enable faculty and students to explore and be inspired by the connections.

## **Majors**

In addition to completing a foundation in the liberal arts, students will either choose to pursue a major in one of the traditional arts or sciences or to pursue careers in nursing, public health, business, education, information and library sciences, social work, computer science, journalism, school health, communication disorders, or recreation.

## **Arts and Sciences**

The School of Arts & Sciences provides access to the broad and deep foundations of existing knowledge in the disciplines comprised by the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, and physical and biological sciences. The school offers our students the opportunity to participate creatively in the production of new knowledge and to recognize the interconnectedness of all branches of learning in the arts and sciences. Students majoring in programs within the school are provided rigorous instruction in the subject knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and typical modes of inquiry of the independent disciplines comprising the arts and sciences. Students have the opportunity to work closely with dedicated and accessible faculty who are active scholars in their chosen fields of study.

## **Professional Studies**

Academic departments focusing on professional studies are located in the Schools of Health and Human Service, Business, Education, and Communication, Information, and Library Science. These departments offer a wide range of pre-professional and accredited or certified professional programs on the undergraduate and graduate levels. While each discipline builds on the liberal arts and sciences foundation, the focus of the junior and senior years is designed to help students apply the values, ethics, purposes and differential modalities of assessment and intervention related to that professional discipline. These are highly structured programs with very specific student outcomes demonstrated in clinical education settings or internships. Many of these programs have earned national accreditation and university designation as programs of excellence.

## **Graduate Programs**

The School of Graduate Studies serves professions and institutions across the state and beyond and has earned the reputation of an outstanding provider of graduate education in New England for both full-time and part-time mid-career students in each graduate degree program in arts and sciences and professional fields. All of Southern's graduate programs have earned at least a regional reputation, while several professional programs have attained national recognition for the scholarship and service of students and faculty. Graduates of the professional programs pass state and national licensure and certification examinations. Many of these programs are community-based because of the requirement that clinical experiences be conducted in community settings.

Many of the graduate professional programs are committed to multidisciplinary education designed to increase multidisciplinary practice in the health and human services. These programs are committed to increasing community partnerships, modeling community services and collaboration, as is the case in the Speech and Hearing Center, the Marriage & Family Clinic, and the Sirico Center for Elders & Families. These programs make a significant contribution to the stability and good standing of the University with its reputation and commitment to excellence.

## **STRATEGIES**

### **2.1 Expand interdisciplinary programming in curriculum and community service at all levels, building on existing models.**

The University will facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty in curriculum and community service. Such curricular collaboration will be implemented across all levels of instruction including general education as well as graduate programs, taking the form of shared syllabi, joint course collaborations, field trips and other activities as well as courses that can linked for a semester. Insofar as Southern Connecticut State University is comprised of liberal arts, graduate and professional programs, the university's interdisciplinary values call for an ongoing dialogue between and among them.

In addition to encouraging an exchange of ideas among faculty, the university will support and expand pedagogical structures that encourage curricular collaborations. The academic strategic plan seeks to expand interdisciplinary collaboration to upper-level courses among the schools.

**Community Service Plan.** The University will also explore methods to increase and coordinate community service efforts of faculty and students across Schools and programs. Community service and related student service learning activities are critical, underdeveloped aspects of SCSU's educational program and mission. The Academic Vice President will convene a process to review Southern's policies and support structures related to community service and recommend specific mechanisms to deepen the institution's engagement in its regional community through clinical services, internships, service learning, participation in community initiatives, and volunteer activities. The resulting plan should enhance coordination across schools to expand options and present a coherent set of opportunities to community partners.

### **2.2 Expand and enrich our faculty resources to meet the challenges of enhanced quality and development.**

The ongoing program assessment process will inform decisions as to the size and composition of the faculty required to support program improvement and accommodate possible enrollment

growth as determined by the Deans and the Academic Vice President. Resource allocation decisions will be based on a thoughtful assessment of overall program quality.

Additional resources will be used to support and reward high-quality programs, based on defined program assessment criteria (see Strategy 2.6).

**2.3 Operate the undergraduate General Education program as a coherent enterprise, under the shared leadership of a faculty committee, the Academic Vice President and the Academic Vice President's Cabinet.**

The Committee on General Education is reviewing General Education requirements and developing a plan for improving this vital component of the Southern's educational mission.

**2.4 Implement a University policy and administrative structure centralizing under the Academic Vice President all international programs, initiatives, and resources.**

In an increasingly interconnected world, Southern must ensure that all programs integrate and reflect international considerations as appropriate. This involves supporting faculty in efforts to develop exchange programs, new international programs or incorporating international considerations in current programs. The centralization of international programming and supports will provide an administrative focus for ensuring that this work is integrated with and supports the university's academic mission.

**2.5 Explore expanded delivery of curriculum on-line through on-line courses and integration of on-line resources and materials into traditional courses, with the same rigorous safeguards for academic standards and ongoing assessment as are applied to all programs.**

SCSU has entered the field of on-line course offerings in a measured way. SCSU presently offers a small number of courses on-line and the ability to complete the entire Master of Library Science degree on-line. Many more faculty members have integrated on-line resources into their courses to enrich the learning experience.

With the demand for high quality on-line courses growing significantly in recent years, SCSU must review its approach and strategy to on-line education if it is to remain competitive and at the forefront of public higher education.

It is recommended that the Vice President for Academic Affairs convene a committee to (1) review current practices at SCSU, CSU and SCSU policies and procedures, offerings of competing institutions, and emerging trends in the field and (2) recommend policies to guide the further development of SCSU's on-line course and degree offerings and specific strategies and actions to implement those recommendations.

**2.6 Continually improve program quality and focus through an on-going assessment process across all schools to assess the mission, vision, performance and goals of each existing undergraduate and graduate program.**

Southern has developed a process to assess existing programs and estimate the potential effectiveness of proposed programs against the following qualitative and quantitative criteria. The Academic Vice President and the Deans in collaboration with the Department Chairs and faculty will use the results of these assessments to set and achieve goals for improvement in our programs and in institutional processes that support them:

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- Resource viability – financial, human, physical
  - i. Faculty size, specialization and competency
  - ii. Facilities, equipment and library resources
  - iii. A financial plan to balance expected costs and revenues for the program
  - iv. Faculty productivity (teaching, scholarship, research, creativity, service)
- Contribution to mission
- Clear and attractive definition of curriculum and outcomes expected, including interdisciplinary focus
- Evidence of quality or potential for quality
  - i. Accreditation and/or benchmarking
  - ii. Reputation among key audiences
  - iii. Research, scholarship and creative activity of faculty and students
  - iv. Graduates' placement and performance
- Favorable enrollment trends and potential
  - i. Projections of student recruitment and enrollment patterns
  - ii. Rates of student retention and degree completion
  - iii. Demand for program
  - iv. Capacity to recruit qualified students
  - v. Retention and degree completion rates
  - vi. Student evaluations of courses, programs and the educational experience
- Diversity and accessibility of program

The assessment process will incorporate qualitative and quantitative measures, recognizing those dimensions of program excellence that are not amenable to easy quantification.

As part of this process, program outcomes of each graduate and undergraduate program should be compared with those of peer institutions and standards for the discipline on selected measures, including:

- Student outcomes
- Faculty characteristics
- Material resources
- Accreditation and reputation among key audiences
- Future challenges and prospects
- Performance measures as requested by the Academic Vice President

The assessment of each program will enable the University to measure the effectiveness of each part of the triad of general education, undergraduate majors, and graduate education as compared to efforts in peer institutions and standards for the discipline. In addition, accreditation by professional organizations and agencies should be the benchmark for quality programs within the University.

The Graduate Council peer review process of program review also uses agreed upon program viability criteria.

**3. Attract, retain and support a diverse faculty who are strong teachers, scholars and participants in the life of the University and in the wider community.**

A large proportion of the full-time faculty has been hired in the last five years. Another major cohort will retire in the next few years, transforming the faculty within a mere decade. The Academic Strategic Plan recognizes the need and opportunity to continue to build a diverse, ever-improving faculty consciously through more active recruitment and support.

**3.1 Enhance faculty recruitment, orientation and development effort.**

The academic strategic plan emphasizes and supports excellence and innovation in teaching, research, and creative activity. To support a distinguished faculty committed to excellence in the integration of teaching and scholarly activity the university will recruit and retain faculty who:

- Help students read carefully, think critically, and express themselves clearly.
- Provide “best” learning opportunities for students employing “cutting-edge” applications.
- Maintain high standards of current practices in their respective disciplines.
- Create an open and supportive learning environment inside and outside of the classroom.
- Help students lead lives with dignity and purpose by recognizing the moral purpose of education.
- Provide opportunities for students to integrate theory and practice.

This will require a number of refinements to processes at Southern, including:

- Ensure that all recruitment for open faculty positions is early enough to maximize the candidate pool.
- Clearly articulate the teaching, scholarship/creative activity and service expectations of all faculty at hiring and throughout the promotion and tenure process.
- Expand efforts to recruit faculty of color in accordance with the University’s affirmative action plan.
- Provide professional development opportunities and ongoing support for faculty, including in emerging pedagogical techniques and use of information technology in the curriculum.

**3.2 Create a Center for Teaching and Learning to promote and support teaching excellence.**

The Center will be charged with leading the University’s efforts to improve and support excellence in teaching by all faculty members. Specific programs of the Center will include:

- Continuation of the Teaching Fellows program providing reassign time to develop teaching techniques.

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- Increased support for curriculum grants and material resources.
- Continued support for conferences on teaching and pedagogy.
- Work with Schools to continue or initiate awards for teaching excellence, including awards exclusively for part-time faculty.

In addition to these measures, the Center will work with the Office of Information Technology to develop new and expand upon existing resources that support effective faculty use of technology in teaching, including measures to:

- Provide incentives that will encourage faculty to develop non-traditional teaching techniques that take advantage of current and developing educational technology.
- Increase levels of support to WebCT and continue the development of hybrid classes and other “web-based” learning modules in conjunction with curriculum development goals.

### **4. Improve the learning experience and achievement of students.**

Southern Connecticut State University seeks to attract highly qualified undergraduate and graduate students while honoring its mission of providing broad access to higher education.

It is important to note that implementation of under Goal 2 related to program quality will also improve the learning experience and achievement of students. Specifically, efforts to promote interdisciplinary programming, international programming and improve the General Education program will all contribute to an enriched learning environment for students.

#### **STRATEGIES**

##### **4.1 Develop programs to enhance the experience of first-year students to improve retention and academic achievement.**

A student’s introduction to college is a critical stage that can determine their later success. First Year Programs at Southern represent a number of initiatives developed to support the transition of new undergraduate students to the Southern community. Current efforts include:

- New Student Orientation is a program designed to introduce new and transfer Southern students to the academics and other programs vital to their successful transition to the Southern community.
- Southern’s First Year Seminar is a three-credit course which was offered on an experimental pilot basis for three years to interested students on entering Southern. The main goals of First Year Seminar are to promote further development of student skills essential to academic success in order to help students gain intellectual confidence; to build the expectation of academic success; and to provide assistance in making the transition to the University.

Specific tactics going forward include:

- Reserve certain sections or course slots for first year fulltime students to address issue of their getting last choices in classes. .

- Reestablish the First Year Experience including a mentoring program to create opportunities for pre-major students and faculty to share the excitement of learning. These “learning communities” are small, personalized, and designed to help students make a connection among their interests, experiences, and their academic courses.
- Expand access to a First Year Seminar for all undergraduate students entering Southern who choose this option, based on results of the repeated pilot program.
- Create an academic program for advanced incoming students pairing them with faculty members to work on a research project.

Faculty members reporting to Academic Affairs will be assigned as coordinators for this program.

#### **4.2 Improve the undergraduate advisement process**

Several committees have studied the advisement process and made specific recommendations. Issues include freshmen taking courses that are too difficult, inconsistent advising, and discontinuities and conflicts between the general advising system for the period before a student enters a major and the advising they receive from their major department. The challenge is to review the best recommendations emerging from these reviews and implement them. Specific measures include:

- Every department will establish and publish a predictable two-year course rotation schedule. The current course rotations in many departments are a major factor in graduation delays for many students. Each department needs to reexamine its course rotations to offer all students the opportunity to complete their program within four years if desired.
- Develop and publish on the web advisement process and standards for all programs. This would include an identification of milestones for each program and help for students in negotiating them. This would also provide measures for tracking interim progress toward graduation.
- Each program must keep their “individual planned programs” up to date to improve coherence and quality of academic programs (alignment, sequencing, contribution to program completion, outcomes of courses) and as an important tools for academic advisement
- Fully implement the CAPP module within BANNER registration system to automate mapping of credits required for graduation, thereby using faculty and student time more efficiently. A CAPP administrative professional has been hired.
- Integrate General Advising and Major Advising with a better transition and handoff between the two systems. This will be facilitated greatly by the new BANNER module.
- Keep the number of advisees per advisor to ratios consistent with accreditation standards. Explore alternatives to the traditional advising model (e.g., group advising, paid advisors vs. faculty in certain departments).
- Publicize existing resources that support advising. For example, the Admissions section of Southern’s website lists classes at local community colleges that meet general education requirements.

**4.3 Ensure that a growing proportion of students meet basic skills requirements on admission through tightening admission standards and working to improve preparation in the K-12 education system.**

An Academic Affairs task force has developed a plan to ensure that all students meet basic academic competencies within their first 24 credits in fulfillment of a recent Board of Trustees resolution. In 2002-2003, this requirement affected 44% of entering freshmen in mathematics and 10% in English. To date, without additional funding, Academic Affairs has established a new placement exam process, added sections of proficiency courses, and conducted outreach to high schools and community colleges.

The full implementation of this resolution will be tempered by the recognition that waivers may be appropriate in selected cases for otherwise high-performing students, a policy consistent with other major institutions in the State.

One measure that will facilitate this strategy will be the establishment of a testing center on campus so that all entering students can conveniently take placement exams in composition, mathematics and foreign languages without disruption to student computer laboratories.

The longer term solutions to this issue must include collaboration with the Connecticut Departments of Education and Higher Education and the local K-12 education systems to improve the academic preparation of all applicants. This effort should build on initiatives like the Math Basic Skills Committee, which includes representatives from many institutions of higher education.

This must include a review of agreements with the Community College system to ensure that admission to their degree recipients as juniors remains guaranteed only for those students meeting basic academic competency standards.

**4.4 Develop systematic and comprehensive assessment methods to measure both student learning outcomes and student engagement/satisfaction.**

Data on student outcomes and satisfaction are crucial to academic planning. Many accrediting agencies and professional associations have already specified student learning outcomes. A clear statement of learning outcomes and a method to measure their attainment should be a core component of all programs and are stated as a factor in program assessment.

Other measures include:

- Encourage faculty to adopt student portfolios as a means of assessing the growth in student learning and offering evidence of student learning.
- Continue annual graduate students' satisfaction survey conducted by the School of Graduate Studies.
- Continue the annual focus group discussions conducted by the School of Graduate Studies to obtain qualitative data on their assessment of their graduate school experience.
- Initiate annual undergraduate students' satisfaction surveys conducted through the OMIR.
- Consider using incentives for students to complete surveys (e.g. require students to complete their course evaluations and satisfaction surveys before enrolling for the next semester).

**5. Attract and retain a highly qualified, economically and culturally diverse student population.**

Southern faces increasing competition from other regional institutions of higher education as these programs increase their recruitment and improve perceived quality and Southern's tuition increases. Implementation of goals and strategies related to the culture of scholarship at Southern, program coherence, and other measures to improve students' learning experience are the primary strategies to achieve this goal, but there are other specific recruitment and support strategies that can be implemented to build on these improvements.

**STRATEGIES**

**5.1 Increase undergraduate and graduate admissions standards gradually over the next 5 years.**

Building on recent trends, Southern should gradually increase the required class rank and GPA of incoming freshmen with the goal of raising the average composite SAT scores for these students to above the national average. Graduate programs should work toward a goal of requiring a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 for admission. These measures will help improve the educational experience at Southern and change perceptions about its academic quality.

**5.2 Increase public awareness regarding existing student, faculty, and program achievements.**

SCSU needs to get the word out about its rich array of programs, research, and student activities as well as the transformation of its physical campus that is underway. Specific steps include:

- Establish a Faculty Advisory Committee to Public Affairs to expand public relations efforts
- Offer more information and resources for prospective students through Southern's website.
- Increase presence in top feeder high schools. For example, place advertisements in high school publications.
- Increase funding to support the marketing of graduate programs through the media and other appropriate marketing venues.

**5.3 Attract more honors students through promotion of specific program strengths and provision of additional merit-based scholarships.**

Faculty can work more closely with the Admissions Office to recruit honors students through promotion of specific program strengths and provision of additional merit-based scholarships.

This will require working with the Office of Financial Aid to target scholarships and with Institutional Advancement to expand private scholarship resources.

**5.4 Increase recruitment of academically qualified students (i.e., reduce percent taking proficiency classes).**

Strategies related to public relations listed in 5.2 will help increase recruitment. Additional strategies include:

- Expand recruitment efforts in New York (including Long Island).

- Expand on-line offerings.

**5.5 Provide competitive graduate assistantships and fellowship support for graduate students.**

For SCSU to continue to grow and develop its graduate school programs and expand its research, expanded support for graduate students is crucial. This financial support is often a primary factor in selection of a graduate program. An important step will be to institutionalize the Graduate School Graduate Assistantship program. Southern should work with the CSU system office and legislators to enact legislation to allow the waiving of tuition for graduate assistants as part of a financial aid and recruitment package.

**5.6 Implement the University Affirmative Action Plan and other strategies to promote diversity (racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, sexual preference).**

SCSU is committed to maintaining a diverse student body. Specific steps to achieve this include:

- Identify and recruit at top feeder high schools in New Haven and other urban areas.
- Expand efforts like the Presidential Scholarship at Hillhouse High School to attract an economically and culturally diverse student body.

**5.7 Seek new funding sources to more adequately meet the financial aid needs of students.**

Many of Southern's students must work 20+ hours per week in order to pay for the costs of their education. Particularly for economically disadvantaged students, financial aid needs to be increased.

<p><b>6. Seek limited growth in enrollment to meet public needs and support continuous improvement of academic quality.</b></p>
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**STRATEGIES**

**6.1 Each Dean will develop enrollment goals for 2004-2009 working with the Academic Vice President and Department and Program Chairs to ensure public needs are met and enrollments are consistent with program quality and viability criteria.**

The Deans are charged with balancing the availability of faculty and facilities with the demands for programs resulting from student choices and market demands for certain fields. While expanding enrollments in most areas is an indicator of success, in certain majors or areas facing facility constraints that take time to address, expanded demand offers the opportunity to be more selective instead of expanding enrollment. Another factor to take into account is the natural growth and contraction of the applicant pool due to demographic factors.

<p><b>7. Expand and enhance library and information technology resources</b></p>
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The University Library plays a vital role in providing a gateway to current and classical information resources to enhance research and scholarship, in supporting the curriculum and in teaching the information competency skills necessary for success at the University and beyond. Support for teaching, scholarship and creative endeavors is essential for creation and communication of knowledge.

Broad access to current information technology across the campus and beyond campus borders is necessary to enable effective teaching and learning and independent research by faculty and students. Technology has become an evolving tool in fostering intellectual growth and is a conduit for involving students in many aspects of university life. A snapshot of an adequate and solid infrastructure cannot adequately demonstrate commitment to an area as dynamic and developing as modern computer based technology. Persistent ongoing evaluation is essential to developing a constantly moving program of campus technology.

## **STRATEGIES**

### **9.1 Enhance and support library facilities, services and collections serving all populations of the university.**

The University Library strives to implement multifaceted approaches to information services and instruction, serving as a resource of first choice to all university scholars. The Library seeks to maximize access to scholarly resources through an evolving balance of print, media, and electronic materials. Library staff support the research initiatives of faculty and graduate students and special undergraduate research projects.

The areas of work to implement this overall strategy include:

- Continue to implement the plan for the renovation and expansion of the library building as a facility dedicated for library use in accordance with national standards that includes spaces for individual study and collaborative learning, enhanced by appropriate technological innovations and display of art collections.
- Play a vital role from the first year experience through the graduate level in developing student abilities in information literacy, research and life-long learning skills. Offer a comprehensive program that highlights strengths of collections and services.
- Continue to utilize evolving information technologies to support library technical and public services, such as digitization projects, web page development, electronic reserves, document delivery, and virtual reference services.
- Increase awareness of available resources through various public relations initiatives. Seek positive exposure through service recognition awards.
- Continue to be a major contributor within the CSU library consortium and seek out additional partnerships within the region and throughout the world that will enhance the library's ability to provide services and resources.
- Continue to utilize American Library Association and other library standards and guidelines to strengthen information services and resources. Persist in ongoing program assessment initiatives, responding to formal and informal feedback regarding information and service needs.

### **9.2 Encourage the innovative and flexible use of technology to enhance teaching, learning, and research.**

Technology is driving change in the academy as well as the wider community and economy. Southern must continuously invest in its computer network and related technology systems, training, and applications in order to remain competitive among higher education institutions.

## **WORKING DRAFT SCSU Academic Strategic Plan for COMMENT**

Southern seeks to extend the learning and research environment to include any location accessible through connectivity tools and use communication technology to become a local connected community and have a visible presence in the global academic and research community.

Implementation measures include:

- Continue to update the University's Information Technology Plan establishing technology investment needs and priorities that focus on:
  - Enhancing faculty-student teaching, learning, and research
    - i. Ensuring that current versions of software are available in a timely fashion
    - ii. Ensuring that computer equipment is updated regularly
  - Enhancing the security of information technology
  - Improving the network infrastructure, architecture, and management to make sure that all users continue to experience good response times
  - Enhancing the use of Banner and ensuring that it interfaces both logically and physically with other applications and projects
  - Planning for future cost-effective implementation of leading edge information technology
  - Enhancing the Help Desk services
- Expand access to external computer facilities where needed to support research in a cost-effective manner
- Provide support for the use of technology in the curriculum (see also Strategy 3.2).
  - Continue supporting the Faculty Technology Resource Center (FTRC) by creating a permanent home for the FTRC so that the Office of Information Technology and Academic Computing have a location to develop the number of faculty who adopt existing teaching technology.
  - Support the Connecticut State University (CSU) Information Technology (IT) Pilot Project Program, in addition to the FTRC, as a "safe haven" and a resource for experimenting with emerging technologies, creating a better educational environment.
- Provide on-going training and technical support in both education-specific technology modules and "basic" workstation components with both independent learning (e.g. Distributed Learning via hybrid courses) and in-person instruction options.
- Develop a cohesive world-wide-web presence that allows individual innovation and shows a recognizable University "face."
- Continue to collaborate with CSU 'sister' institutions and the CSU office as outlined in the CSU Information Technology Strategic Plan including:
  - Taking advantage of synergies, opportunities for shared services, cooperation, collaboration, and cost savings

- Creating technology priorities to lessen the stresses on our resources
- Creating savings opportunities which will allow for investment in key projects

Our investments in technology must position Southern to take full advantage of the next generation of technology products.

### ***Goals in Support of Academic Goals***

<b>8. Improve all support services to enhance the academic mission and functions of the University.</b>
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Various initiatives to improve the basic systems that support the academic enterprise – including enrollment, registration, financial aid, logistical supports and finance – have resulted in incremental improvements in these services. However, the planning process identified continued, significant frustration among administrators, faculty and students over inefficiencies and problems with these vital supports. Efforts to improve these services based on systematic input from administrators, faculty, and students must be redoubled and the implementation accelerated in order to achieve our academic goals.

A range of other services beyond those called out in these strategies are crucial to enhance campus life, build a sense of community, and support student success, from counseling to student activities to athletic programs to residential and food services. Academic Affairs remains vitally interested in the quality of these services and stands ready to provide input to all efforts to improve them.

#### **STRATEGIES**

##### **8.1 Develop specific plans to improve the enrollment/registration process building on results of recent analyses.**

Specific disconnects and problems in the enrollment/registration system have been documented by a cross-departmental administration-faculty team which put forward options for improvement. While this work has resulted in a number of specific improvements, there remains a need for an overall improvement plan and a process to drive continuous improvement.

##### **8.2 Develop a formal methodology to convey faculty and student needs and feedback to support service offices, linked to action planning and accountability process for tracking improvement.**

This strategy envisions an ongoing planning and feedback mechanism to inform and develop specific improvements to key support services, including registration, financial aid, and bursars office. This process should address issues that affect student retention and graduation rates, sap faculty and administrative resources in their efforts to help students resolve issues, and undermine the achievement of academic goals. It should ensure that plans are coordinated across departments and implemented in each department.

This improvement plan can then be approved and implemented by the Vice Presidents with jurisdiction in each area with progress tracked through a clear accountability mechanism.

**8.3 Enhance the capability of the Office of Management and Institutional Research (OMIR) to support the ongoing assessment and planning processes at the School and department levels.**

Accurate, timely data available in accessible formats is critical to the implementation of this Plan. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Deans will work with OMIR to ensure that this data and supporting analysis is available to support their efforts. OMIR recently consolidated its offices in Wintergreen and has begun analyzing the nature and volume of data requests.

A next step is to establish a template to build a database enabling OMIR to track and deliver data and performance indicators in greatest demand by the university community.

**8.4 Provide adequate administrative support to facilitate increased requirements emerging from the plan in the areas of assessment, data collection, and coordination across departments and schools.**

The Plan recommends a number of measures that together will require increased administrative work to facilitate data collection, scheduling, and communications. This will require a commitment of adequate and appropriate administrative support within the Schools.

<p><b>9. Develop and maintain an attractive, environmentally appropriate campus that enhances the educational experience and encourages social interaction.</b></p>
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Southern is in the midst of the most significant capital improvement plan in several decades. This plan resulted from the recognition by CSU and Southern leaders, supported by the Governor and Legislature that maintaining the quality of academic programs and campus life at Southern required a major investment in campus planning and facility development.

The physical campus is a reflection of the priorities of a University. Adequate instructional spaces are integral parts of the educational process. Because the academic program drives the facility plan, new buildings have been and will continue to be designed in close collaboration with Deans, departments, and faculty representatives. New buildings and renovated spaces will reflect the faculty defined needs and be models of environmental sensitivity and energy efficiency.

**STRATEGIES**

**9.1 Continue ongoing refinement and implement of the comprehensive Facility Development Plan.**

Classrooms and supporting facilities will be designed to fit the pedagogical techniques and mission of Southern's various programs. The integration of technology in classrooms is increasingly important. Expressed needs of faculty include:

- Flexible faculty-student workshop and laboratory spaces for research and teaching.
- Clinical space
- Computer Labs with equipment replaced at least every three years.
- Flexible classroom space with moveable work tables and chairs.

- Specialized spaces as required (e.g. trading room at the business school)
- Seminar Rooms, “High Tech classrooms,” semi-large high tech equipped classroom and meeting rooms.
- More auditorium style classrooms
- All new classrooms should be furnished with tables rather than arm chairs and be equipped with ceiling mounted projectors, connections between the podium and the projectors and a connection to the Internet.

Phase I and Phase II capital projects described in the university’s facility plan.

### **9.2 Ensure adequate maintenance of all facilities.**

As facilities are upgraded, the provision adequate day-to-day maintenance of all facilities remains a critical priority both to support the learning environment and prevent deterioration of the new facilities.

### **9.3 Expand external resources to meet needs for major equipment to support academic disciplines.**

In addition to time and financial resources, academic excellence requires the provision of material support. Different academic disciplines require different material resources. Such material resources would range from lab space and lab equipment to library resources.

Such areas of support to be explored and funded in consultation with faculty include, but are not limited to library resources, lab equipment and discipline-specific software.

## **VI. Financing the Academic Strategic Plan**

The University faces a resource challenge – how will it balance its many worthy, competing demands on its limited financial and human resources? While academic decisions will be driven by the vision of Southern as an excellent center of teaching, learning and creative pursuits, the reality of constrained resources means hard choices will be required at all levels. The plan sets a direction of both expanding the resources available to meet the most critical academic priorities; and refining the process of budgeting and financial management to ensure that we live within our means and make hard financial choices in a fair manner based on sound academic criteria.

We set the following financial goals and strategies to acquire the needed resources to fully implement our Academic Strategic Plan.

### **A. Ensure that the totality of academic commitments is financially sustainable.**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs will work closely with the President, the Cabinet, and the Deans to balance University needs and resources in a manner that advances the goals of the Academic Strategic Plan. We must strive to ensure that resources are expanded and are focused on the central academic mission and that costs in other parts of the University are contained (i.e., balanced in relation to this central academic mission).

Program decisions will continue to be based on the full range of considerations described in the program assessment process (Strategy 2.6). Academic considerations will drive program decisions with the understanding that all programs must be operated in a fiscally sound manner.

## **STRATEGIES**

- Increase the capacity of schools and programs to acquire resources needed for their programs.
- Academic Affairs will collaborate with Finance and Administration and the Deans to develop a financial model for each school and department or program unit to support program planning and budgeting.
- Each academic unit will be expected to operate within its assigned resources. Program changes must take into account financial performance projections or trends.
- Advocate strongly with the Board of trustees that part-time students should be counted in the formula used to distribute state funds to SCSU.

### **B. Expand financial resources available for the achievement of established academic goals through enhanced collaboration between Academic Affairs and Institutional Advancement.**

In the difficult state fiscal environment, Southern must develop other resources to accomplish many of the goals of this Plan. This is the role of the Office of Institutional Advancement which provides support to the Deans, administrators, and faculty in their efforts to fund current and new innovative programs and curricular enhancements.

## **STRATEGIES**

### **Establish a working partnership between Institutional Advancement and the academic schools and programs, under the direction of the Academic Vice President and appropriate Dean, to secure resources in support of program priorities.**

Specific implementation steps include:

- Identify academic needs that are appropriate to fund through development efforts.
- Develop an annual fund development plan with specific funding targets by sector and by program.
- Expand the awareness among leaders of academic programs about the potential of major gifts to support academic goals.
- Work with Sponsored Research and Academic Programs (SPAR) to build a stronger working relationship with academic schools and departments and to expand support for faculty in securing funding for research and programs
- Build positive relationships between academic units and potential donors identified in collaboration with OIA.

Specific fundraising priorities from the Plan include:

- Supplement faculty research, curriculum development, conferences, regional and state meetings, and travel grants
- Student scholarships.
- Financial aid and on-campus housing for graduate students and visiting faculty.
- Visiting internships.
- Endowed faculty chairs.
- Learning labs, student centers, etc.

Resources raised with the assistance of OIA and SPAR should be managed by the academic program or unit for which the resources were secured.

## **VII. Implementing the Strategic Plan: Roles and Responsibilities**

To meet the challenge of this Plan, the Southern community must unify to implement its most important strategic priorities. The Plan recommends a number of specific measures and continued study processes that will engage all sectors of the university. A central challenge will be to secure the resources required to implement the strategy and any policy changes identified. Appendix 1 details the benchmarks and measures that will be used to gauge progress in implementing the plan.

The Academic Vice President will lead the effort to implement the Plan with faculty and Deans' support. As the academic leaders of the individual schools, the Deans will drive the implementation of the plan at the School level and provide support and guidance to the Academic Vice President.

The Plan recognizes and affirms participatory faculty governance processes in the assessment and refinement of academic programs and departments. This affirmation and facilitation will recognize, for example, the role of the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum, the Faculty Senate, the Administrative Faculty Senate, The Graduate Council and the role of academic departments.

The future and continued success of Southern as a vital institution of higher education is in our collective hands.