Southern Connecticut State University

Our Priorities for 2023 and Beyond

PRESIDENT JOE BERTOLINO

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

Build a strategic roadmap to move the dial on key priorities that were established on an interim basis prior to the launch of a full strategic planning process for Southern. What distinguishes Southern as a modern, forward-focused public regional comprehensive university?

- It is the engine of social mobility for the southern Connecticut region and the state

- Innovation in teaching and learning

- Cutting-edge research and scholarship

- Our leadership of, and commitment to, social justice and anti-racism

- It is a key driver of economic, social, and cultural vitality in our communities

WHAT WE DEFINED AS OUR INTERIM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Advancing Social Justice and Anti-Racism
2. Maintaining Academic Excellence
3. Driving Enrollment
4. Ensuring Student Success
5. Engaging our Community and Expanding our Reach
6. Preparing for the Future

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

Where will we focus our attention in the next 12-18 months?

PRIORITY: Social Justice and Anti-Racism

WHAT
1. Define what social justice and anti-racism is for Southern
2. Embed DEI in the Academic Mission
3. Continue to Implement Equitable and Anti-Racist Policies and Processes

PRIORITY: Enrollment

WHAT
4. Centralize K-14 Relationships
5. Promote Southern's brand and flagship disciplines
6. Enroll and Support Adult Learners
7. Ensure Equitable Affordability
8. Expand Accelerated Bachelor's Degree Offerings

PRIORITY: Academic Excellence and Student Success

WHAT
9. Facilitate Social Mobility
10. Invest in and Foster Analytics
11. Financial Support
12. Faculty Scholarship

PRESIDENT JOE WILL ALSO

- Place renewed focus on the culture of care at Southern, for our students and each other; and define the culture of leadership moving into the strategic planning process:for instance, how we communicate, engage in inclusive and transparent dialogue, place laser focus on planning for the future, and value entrepreneurialism.
- Launch an inclusive strategic planning process to guide Southern's next five years.

While much of this work is underway, in other areas we may be initiating discussions and defining actions. The intention is to have a foundation in place and be prepared for fiscal year 2024, when resources will be more constrained and Southern will need to leverage the opportunities identified to promote our distinctiveness as a social justice and social mobility institution, increase enrollment, and advance our mission.

I. Social Justice and Anti-Racism

1. Define what social justice and anti-racism is for Southern.

Southern is committed to combating social inequalities and racism on campus and in society at large. We will define what this commitment means to the institution and at the division and department level, what Southern will do to end inequality, and how we will engage with the community to promote equity, justice, and antiracism. DEI and ICM have been working to define social justice and anti-racism. We will also involve DEIAC, deans, and the faculty senate.

2. Embed DEI in the Academic Mission

Universities can promote a more just society by preparing students to combat racial, socio-economic, and gender-based injustice in their workplaces and communities (Postsecondary Value Commission). Southern's commitment to social justice and anti-racism must be embedded in our curriculum, research, and promotion and tenure processes.

How:
- Embed DEI in the curriculum
- Embed DEI in P&T processes

3. Ensure Equitable and Anti-Racist Policies and Processes

Higher education must do more to dismantle its own inequitable policies and practices, which play a role in perpetuating and exacerbating the injustices in society at large (Postsecondary Value Commission). To address gaps in access, completion, and post-college outcomes, Southern has engaged in assessing its policies and processes.

How:
- Continue our work to assess and rewrite policies and practices for equity and anti-racism
- Train Hiring Managers consistently and intentionally

II. Driving Enrollment

4. Centralize K-14 Relationships

To reach BIPOC and low-income communities, universities must develop early college awareness programs with local schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools. They also must build robust partnerships with local community colleges, and conduct routine outreach to area community organization to encourage enrollment of BIPOC and students from low-income backgrounds, including adult and returning adult students (Postsecondary Value Commission).

How:
- Earlier outreach to K-12 students
- Improve/clarity in process for course transferability
- Expansion of dual admission programs with community colleges

5. Promote Southern's brand and flagship disciplines
How:
- Define Southern's outcomes in ways that resonate to prospective students and families
- Promote Southern's unique commitment and strengths in equity and inclusion
- Brand and promote our flagship disciplinary areas

6. Serve and Support Stop Outs, Connecticut residents with some college but no degree completion, and Adult Learners

A bachelor's degree is the clear pathway to social mobility. There are 373,000 people in Connecticut with some college, but who did not complete a degree, and 1.9 million in New York.

How:
- Understand why students are leaving Southern and how we can keep them
- Enhance our strategy for serving Connecticut citizens with some college education who did not complete their degree, and adult learners – this could include through cohort degree programs, degree completion programs, online and summer offerings to attract adult learners
- Assess demand and needs for wrap-around services for adult learners, including modality of service offerings and availability after business hours. Explore national best practices

7. Facilitate Equitable Affordability

We need to look at how we can lower the costs for our students, both for competitive advantage with other area institutions, and for expanding access to those for whom college has been out of financial reach. Need-based grants cover full tuition after applying Pell Grants and state grants and are a frequent offering by institutions with a commitment to affordability. They are especially helpful for low-income students and students of color (AASCU Brief).

How:
- Review our pricing strategy and tuition policies and work with the system office to implement changes. Econometric modelling for entrants. Stratified retention modeling from returners
- Engage philanthropic partners for need-based and supplemental grants
- Demonstrate affordability to students and their families in public statements, website, and outreach publications
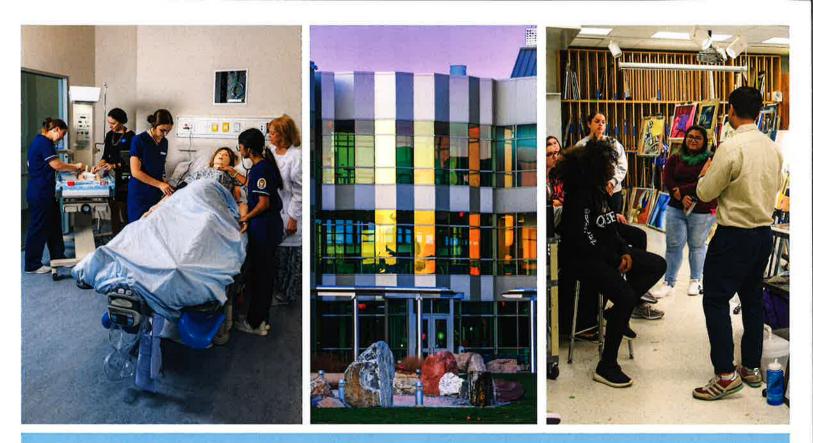
8. Expand Accelerated Bachelor's Degree Offerings

Accelerated Bachelor's degrees provide affordable access to students who can complete degrees on a reduced timeline.

How:
- Expand cadre of accelerated bachelor's degrees
- Explore best practices where high school juniors and seniors can receive tuition waivers for up to 27 credit hours

III. Academic Excellence and Student Success

9. Social Mobility

Postsecondary education offers individuals a path to social mobility and fosters economic and social development in the community. Southern seeks to be the social mobility engine of the region and state, with particular emphasis on eliminating structural inequalities to provide equitable opportunities and outcomes for BIPOC, students from low-income backgrounds, and women.

How:

- Partner with industry to offer paid internships
- Build traction for integration internships/experiential learning/coops in curriculum for credit
- Centralize, restructure, integrate with advising and career services
- Embed career guidance and vocational discernment in the curriculum
- Develop key points of contact between the Office of Career and Professional Development, academic units, and institutional advancement/alumni relations

10. Financial Support

Some students may need additional funds to finish their degrees if their aid sources have been maximized and as emergencies or unexpected expenses arise. Microgrants and emergency grants are proven game changers for improving persistence of enrolled students.

How:

- Identify how many additional students would graduate if they received completion or emergency grants and use this data to continue to seek funding and provide microgrants / emergency grants for students in need
- Hire Corporate & Foundation Relations Director and explore completion grants and other scholarship opportunities with industry

11. Analytics

Southern will leverage data assets and create systems and tools to identify and remedy gaps in enrollment, retention, completion for BIPOC and low-income students. These tools help identify students not meeting core benchmarks that predict their success and allow us to intervene and assist them on their academic journey.

How:

- Create a data governance committee and plan
- Identify data sources and map student lifecycle

12. Promote Faculty Scholarship

Regional public comprehensive universities can play a role in solving critical societal issues and engaging in community-based research. Community-engaged scholarship strengthens the quality and impact of academic research and partners with the community for perspective and guidance.

How:

- Increase undergraduate engagement in research
- Promote Engaged scholarship