South Suburban College

Strategic Planning Retreat Report

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Part I: Introduction and Summary of Consensus Strategic Directions

A. Introduction

Like many community colleges around the country, South Suburban College (SSC) is operating in a rapidly-evolving, increasingly complex, and ever more challenging environment. Over the last several decades, we have seen massive shifts in the global economy; a growing transition toward knowledge- and service-based industry sectors; and increasing economic and workforce competition regionally, nationally, and internationally – placing new expectations and stresses on educational institutions, educators, and students. The recent economic recession, from which the U.S. is still recovering, compounds these dynamics. At the same time, the nation's community colleges have increasingly been called upon to "be all things to all people": To provide the gateway to four-year degrees; to develop skilled workforces; and to serve increasing numbers of students and more diverse kinds of students, from recent high school graduates to mature workers re-training for new careers, and including increasing numbers of students that face English language barriers and are economically and/or educationally disadvantaged. Adding to the challenge, while demands upon educational institutions have been increasing, funding has remained stagnant or has decreased, requiring that community colleges pursue creative new approaches to partnership, collaboration, and resource-leveraging.

Increasing the complexity of these challenges are sobering trends related to students' college readiness, college completion, and credential attainment. Increasing numbers of high school graduates arrive at college unprepared to perform college-level work; several national studies indicate that only about 25% of high school graduates intending to go to college are indeed "college-ready" in the areas of English, reading, math, and science. This gap in students' college readiness obviously has significant implications for developmental (remedial) education, and, ultimately, college completion and credential attainment. Studies indicate that about 60% of community college students take at least one developmental education course, and students can get "stuck" in developmental education courses for three years or more before being ready to enroll in credit-bearing courses that count toward attainment of post-secondary credentials.[1] This trend can exhaust students' financial resources, limit their earning and advancement power in the labor market, and, ultimately, discourage them from staying in college through attaining their credential. Indeed, "[f]ewer than half (46%) of students who enter community colleges with the goal of earning a degree or certificate have attained that goal, transferred to a baccalaureate institution, or are still enrolled six years later."[2]

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[1] "Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future," A Report from the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, American Association of Community Colleges, April 2012, p. 10, http://www.aacc.nche.edu/21stCenturyReport

[2] "Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future," A Report from the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, American Association of Community Colleges, April 2012, p. 9, http://www.aacc.nche.edu/21stCenturyReport

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This scenario is, without question, daunting – particularly given projections that by 2018, approximately 65% of all jobs in the U.S. will require a post-secondary certificate or degree. But this significant challenge simultaneously offers community colleges a tremendous opportunity:

> "The American dream is at risk. Because a highly educated population is fundamental to economic growth and a vibrant democracy, community colleges can help reclaim that dream. But stepping up to this challenge will require dramatic redesign of these institutions, their mission, and, most critically, their students' educational experiences."
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> ~ *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, A Report from the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, American Association of Community Colleges, April 2012

SSC chose to seize this opportunity as it began the process for developing the college's new strategic plan, pursuing a fundamentally different approach that looked outside of the college's walls to actively engage diverse stakeholders in the community – as well as internal college personnel and students – to provide input to strategic plan priorities and development. This planning approach was intentionally inclusive and transparent, market-focused, and data-driven, and was designed to engage internal and external college communities not just as stakeholders, but as true "stockholders" in SSC. It included conducting an online survey to gather input on SSC's performance and desired future strategic directions from internal and external college stakeholders; conducting economic and workforce data and program gap and surplus analyses; and developing and distributing an environmental scan report (released in February 2014) that synthesized stakeholder survey findings and economic and workforce data and program gap and surplus analysis findings. SSC then convened approximately 100 internal and external college stakeholders in a strategic planning retreat, held February 12-13, 2014, to gather input, discuss critical needs and opportunities, and craft a set of strategic directions to provide the foundation for the college's new strategic plan.

SSC's strategic planning process is guided by a dual focus upon supporting student success and advancing community prosperity. It is intentionally aligned to the American Association of Community College's (AACC) 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges' 2012 report, *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, which includes recommendations for reimagining the community college, known as "The Three *R*s":

1. Redesign students' educational experiences;
2. Reinvent institutional roles; and
3. Reset the system.

Within the broader AACC 21st-Century Commission framework of recommendations, SSC drilled down into three areas of focus most relevant to the college's particular vision, opportunities, and priorities:

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1. Increasing students' readiness to undertake college-level work, for example:
   a. Expanding partnerships and alignment with the K-12 education system;
   b. Enhancing foundational and basic skill attainment;
   c. Pursuing innovations in "bridge" and developmental education; and
   d. Providing targeted interventions for at-risk students.

2. Improving completion rates, whether the completion is marked by attainment of an occupational certification(s) or a degree, for example:
   a. Improving student supports;
   b. Enhancing access and flexibility;
   c. Clarifying and streamlining educational and career pathways;
   d. Reducing achievement gaps among different student populations; and
   e. Accelerating certificate and degree attainment.

3. Closing skill gaps in the community; that is, aligning graduates' learning and credentials with industry and occupational demand, for example:
   a. Aligning programming and services to target industry and employer needs;
   b. Aligning educational output (number of students and credentials) to regional demand;
   c. Building coherent educational and career pathways in targeted industries; and
   d. Contextualizing learning.

Woven throughout all three elements of planning focus were themes related to SSC's advocacy roles, its institutional accountability, and its policies and investments.

Taken together, the three key framework elements – college readiness, college completion, and closing skill gaps – combined with the overarching themes of advocacy, accountability, and policy and investment, drove SSC's strategic planning process, provided the structure for the February 2014 retreat, and will guide the college's development of its new strategic plan.

B. Summary of Consensus Strategic Directions

During the February 2014 strategic planning retreat, participants developed, refined, and came to consensus on the following five strategic directions. SSC will use these strategic directions to form the basis for development of goals, strategies, activities, and performance metrics in the college's new

strategic plan. Please see Part III for further detail on the planning retreat themes and discussions that informed development of these priority strategic directions.

Enhancing College Readiness, Student Success, and College Completion

Strategic Direction #1:

Shorten remediation time and accelerate transition to college-level coursework: Reduce the time it takes students to advance from developmental education to college-level courses by *X amount/percentage*[3] over the next five (5) years.

Strategic Direction #2:

Students of today and tomorrow will enter SSC where they are, and the college will engage them in an individualized, student-centered process to ensure **s**tudent **s**uccess and **c**ompletion that is based upon demonstrated best-practice models and is rigorously measured through outcomes assessment.

Closing Skill Gaps

Strategic Direction #3:

Enhance collaboration with all K-12 stakeholders (district staff, guidance counselors, parents, students, etc.) to raise awareness about career opportunities at the certificate/associate degree level.

Strategic Direction #4:

In collaboration with regional partners, engage employers in targeted industry sectors in sustained relationships to identify, develop, and fill career pathways marked by relevant, workforce-driven certificates and degrees.

Strategic Direction #5:

Design and implement a competency-based, vs. program/course-based, approach to curriculum and credential design and development.[4]

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[3] SSC retreat participants determined that the target reduction amount should not be defined until relevant baseline data has been reviewed and analyzed.

[4] During the planning retreat, it was decided that SSC would later determine whether this strategic direction should remain as a stand-alone or be incorporated as a strategy under either Strategic Direction #2 or Strategic Direction #4. In addition, some retreat participants noted that there may be internal college policy barriers related to expanding the use of prior learning assessment. It was decided that SSC will explore this issue further in order to resolve any barriers that may exist.

Part II: Agenda and Process for the Strategic Planning Retreat

As noted previously, SSC's strategic planning framework, combined with its focus upon engaging external college stakeholders in the planning process, informed the agenda for the two-day retreat:

Day 1 – Wednesday, February 12, 2014	
8:00 AM – 8:15 AM	President's Welcome and Charge: Don Manning, President, SSC
8:15 AM – 8:45 AM	Keynote Address: Dr. Harry Berman, Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education
8:45 AM – 9:15 AM	Setting the Context for Strategic Planning: Rick Maher, President and CEO, Maher & Maher
9:15 AM – 12:30 PM	Three Discussion Panels Aligned to Planning Framework: ▪ Increasing College Readiness ▪ Improving College Completion Rates ▪ Closing Skill Gaps
2:00 – 4:00 PM	Three Break-Out Groups Aligned to Planning Framework: ▪ Increasing College Readiness ▪ Improving College Completion Rates ▪ Closing the Skills Gap
4:00 – 4:30 PM	In-Process Review and Break-Out Group Report-Outs
Day 2 – Thursday, February 13, 2014	
8:30 – 10:30 AM	Three Break-Out Groups (continued)
10:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Break-Out Group Report-Outs and Discussion
1:00 – 2:30 PM	Gaining Consensus on Strategic Directions
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Closing Remarks and Next Steps: Don Manning, President, SSC

Through lunch on Day 1, planning retreat attendees included approximately 50 internal SSC personnel and students and approximately 50 external community partner representatives. On the morning of Day 1, the Welcome, Keynote Address, and Setting the Context segments oriented all attendees to SSC's new strategic planning approach; the relationship of SSC's plan development effort to the AACC 21st-Century Commission's recommendations; and the national and global education, workforce, and economic dynamics driving the need for community college innovation. Following these segments, speakers on three moderated panels presented and discussed key issues, themes, and needs related to the three main planning framework elements (panelists were external to SSC). Please see the Appendix for the detailed retreat agenda, which includes presenter information for each discussion panel.

Following lunch on Day 1, external retreat participants were excused. On the afternoon of Day 1 and the morning of Day 2, internal SSC participants reconvened in break-out groups aligned to the three planning framework elements to:

1. Discuss the key themes and "take-aways" they gleaned from the Day 1 morning sessions and panels within their particular area of focus;
2. Conduct an analysis of SSC's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relative to their respective area of focus; and
3. Craft and refine three to five recommended strategic directions the college should embark on within their planning element, in order to address the needs, challenges, and opportunities raised during the Day 1 morning sessions and panels.

Following the break-out group sessions, planning groups reported out to the full group on recommended strategic directions within their particular areas of focus. The full group then participated in an exercise to come to consensus on a set of strategic directions that would serve as the foundation for the development of SSC's new strategic plan. The group came to agreement on five priority strategic directions, discussed in Part IV.

Part III: Retreat Output – Keynote Address, Discussion Panels, and Break-Out Group Discussions

This section of the report includes:

1. Highlights from the retreat Keynote Address;
2. A summary of each discussion panel's ideas and perspectives; and
3. A summary of each break-out group's discussion.

Output from the panel discussions and break-out group sessions are presented under each relevant planning framework element (readiness, completion, or skill gaps). However, please recognize that there are certainly overlaps and cross-connects among the three areas, and that in several cases, the consensus strategic directions, discussed in more detail in Part IV, "touch" more than one planning framework element.

A. Keynote Address Highlights: Dr. Harry Berman, Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education

❖ High school and hard work no longer provide entry to the middle class; technology, globalization, and complex markets have made lower-skill, middle-class jobs obsolete. Education is the antidote to inequality, which is at the highest levels since the Great Depression.

❖ Illinois is a member of the Alliance of States under the Complete College America initiative. The state has made a commitment that by 2025, 60% of the adult population will have a post-secondary credential (the "60 by '25" goal). (See also the Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success.) Barriers to achieving this goal:
  ▪ The number of individuals graduating from high school in Illinois is declining.
  ▪ Outmigration of high school graduates (49th in nation).
  ▪ Increasing level of poverty and declining state-based financial aid; nearly 50% of students in Illinois public schools are low-income.
  ▪ Students are accumulating debt, but no degree: Only 5% graduate in two years, and only 12% graduate in three years.
  ▪ Credit requirements for degrees have "ballooned": Norm is 60 credits, but average is now 78.8.

❖ Student success strategies (see Complete College America):
  ▪ Remedial education: College begins and ends with remediation. Assessment and placement testing are key obstacles to success. Use multiple measures and a testing score range (rather than a single score cut-off). Provide integrated student supports and corequisite, rather than prerequisite, remedial education. See Core Principles for Transforming Remedial Education.
  ▪ College completion: Time is the enemy of college completion. Support students in going "all in" by attending full-time and taking 15 credit hours per semester. Borrowing more

money in the short term to attend full-time saves money in the long run. Attending full-time has been shown to support completion even for lower-performing students.

- Guided academic pathways to college completion: Too much choice – especially uninformed choice – leads to paralysis. Too much freedom in choosing courses leads to increased student debt and lower completion rates. Eliminate the "undecided" option; instead have all students enter broad, exploratory "meta majors" that serve as "on-ramps." Provide academic maps for each semester and offer block scheduling and cohort-based classes, which also support full-time enrollment.
- Pursue high-impact education strategies: First-year seminars, learning communities, undergraduate research opportunities, and internships all enhance likelihood of completion (and have significant impacts for at-risk students in particular).
- Engage adults with some college but no degree: Incentivize this population to return to school. Waive fees and offer one-stop advising, guidance, and counseling, as well as more online courses. Use prior learning assessment (focus on competencies vs. "seat time"). Resources: [Kentucky KnowHow2Go](#), [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#), [Complete the Degree Chicago](#), [LearningCounts](#), [Council for Adult and Experiential Learning Prior Learning Assessment](#).

B. Increasing College Readiness

1. Discussion Panel Themes

- ❖ There needs to be co-ownership of the remediation challenge. Elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education must all own and work together to address the challenge.
- ❖ Better connections/exchange and articulation between K-12 and community colleges: Students need to understand what college is like before they get there. Don't wait until high school; partnerships are needed at the elementary school level.
- ❖ Need proactive assessment and intervention; don't wait until students are failing to address readiness challenges.
- ❖ Focus on career readiness as well as college readiness, and articulate defined academic and career pathways for students at a younger age. More contextualized learning opportunities (school + work/internships/experiential learning) to help prepare students for college and beyond.
- ❖ Employer engagement and parental engagement are critical to the readiness discussion.
- ❖ Focus on modularized, stackable bridge programming to help address readiness and foundational skill gaps – see the [I-BEST model](#).

2. Break-Out Group Discussion Themes

Major Themes
- ❖ Decisions around developmental education must be data-driven

- Incorporate curriculum design models that are based on outcomes assessment results and best practice models from developmental education research
- Desired outcomes: Ability to make informed decisions, targeted support and effective redesign

❖ Need to rigorously assess the degree to which current developmental education design at SSC is effective and successful and make adjustments accordingly
- Must define college readiness and align with college-level coursework
- Necessary remediation should be made more effective through curriculum redesign
- Desired outcomes: Changes in pedagogical strategies, new developmental education models (corequisite courses, modular/stackable courses, community/Adult Education, etc.), embedded support, reduced remedial course offerings, reduced time to completion, increased student success

❖ Create interdisciplinary/blended models between student and academic services
- Redesign OCS (first semester/first year experience course) to offer renewed focus on student learning outcomes related to critical, analytical, problem-solving, study, and social/life skills and academic planning and completion
- Desired outcomes: Better-prepared students

❖ Increase the number of students who complete developmental education in less time and transition to credit and other career pathways
- Evaluate and expedite the intake process to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Desired outcomes: Students move through pathways more quickly, better placement

❖ Strengthen partnerships to address readiness/remediation challenges
- Strengthen partnerships among K-12, community education, and academic services for the purpose of developing college-ready skills
- Desired outcomes: Increase in the number of students who are college-ready upon entry

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis: College Readiness	HELPFUL to Achieving Objectives	HARMFUL to Achieving Objectives
Internal Origin (attributes of the organization)	**Strengths** 1. Have great framework to collect outcomes assessment 2. Supplemental academic/support services are strong 3. Existing model for pairing developmental education with college-level and contextualized curriculum 4. Existing 1c.h. model 5. Existing models for transition/bridge/dual credit	**Weaknesses** 1. No current database 2. Large percentage of students are unsuccessful in the current model 3. Current offerings are not as effective as desired 4. Limited funding and instructors 5. Better intake placement needed 6. Students remain under-prepared (lack of early testing and test prep) 7. Muddied communication between SSC and feeder districts, as well among departments/areas in-house
External Origin (attributes of the environment)	**Opportunities** 1. Build upon existing developmental education/college level design 2. Exploration of new and re-tooling of existing curriculum models 3. Expand model to English (college-level) 4. Increase credit hours/full load opportunity for students in need of remediation 5. Implement placement activities that include self-paced remediation 6. Make the overview provided in orientation mandatory 7. Review/realignment of K-12 Common Core and college readiness 8. Parental/family engagement around readiness issues 9. Strategic scheduling of developmental education courses 10. Engage at the K-8 and 9-12 levels – SSC counselors engage with the schools	**Threats** 1. Internal resistance 2. State-level mandates related to Intermediate Algebra 3. Decline in enrollment in upper-level classes 4. Student resistance 5. Students won't buy into the design/won't do it 6. No funding to support professional development discussions (K-12 teachers and SSC faculty) 7. Budget/declining tax revenues

C. Improving College Completion Rates

1. Discussion Panel Themes

❖ All college personnel must rally around the completion message: Focus on full-time attendance, student success, and college completion – "agree to degree" message. Engage faculty as student mentors, particularly for at-risk students.

❖ Advising/coaching is critical: Students don't do "optional." Must map coherent and clear pathways for students. Map entire programs from start to credential, rather than semester-by-semester course selection. "Meta majors" and block scheduling are important components. Less "optionality."

❖ Focus on helping students "learn how to learn."

❖ SSC needs to be a convener related to the completion barriers students face, e.g. poverty, race/ethnicity disparities, income and education disadvantages, etc. SSC has a social contract with the community to explore and address these issues.

❖ Accelerate transition to credit-bearing courses through "early start" programs, supplemental education, and corequisite developmental education.

❖ Don't focus on courses; focus on competency-based, "plug-and-play" modules.

❖ Look at attendance patterns. Students are "college-hopping" and acquiring too many credits but still not getting to certificates/degrees more quickly.

❖ Implement a consortium model: Combine resources with other area institutions and share existing courses among institutions to create/tailor programs at no new cost. Helps to address capacity and enrollment challenges.

❖ Create learning communities, particularly for at-risk students. Engage students to help their peers with navigation and problem-solving.

❖ Online learning is not appropriate for all students, particularly new/less experienced students. Face-to-face teaching/learning may be more effective with certain cohorts; be strategic in how online learning is leveraged.

❖ Consider conducting regular student surveys in which results are published and the college has to respond publicly (Illinois Institute of Technology Model). Identify and respond to what students feel is holding them back.

❖ Advance completion by using prior learning assessment, particularly for students with prior educational/work experience.

2. Break-Out Group Discussion Themes

Major Themes

❖ Define success metrics for college completion

❖ Optimize admission, enrollment, assessment, testing, counseling, and registration process/experience for new students (improve/streamline the process for "on-boarding")

❖ Start with individualized, student-focused/student centered assessment

❖ "One size" does not fit all students; must be respectful of and responsive to students' individual needs

❖ Encourage full-time enrollment for all students at the beginning of their college careers

❖ Student restrictions and wait lists are hindering completion

❖ Mandate "intrusive" advising/counseling throughout students' entire time at SSC; require all students to participate in counseling to complete; assign counselors that stay with students for the duration of their time at SSC

❖ Create clear and defined academic/career pathways and course selection maps for students

❖ Need for stackable credentials leading to degrees in all departments

❖ Shorten the amount of time students spend in remediation (adopt best practice models)

❖ Implement cohorts/learning communities for student success

❖ Block scheduling: Offer courses at the same time across semesters and curriculums to improve retention

❖ Provide students practical opportunities to apply workforce skills

❖ Increase online educational offerings and the technology to support online learning

❖ Partner with other institutions to offer courses that SSC may not be able to offer itself

❖ Offer transitions from non-credit to credit/offer credit based on experience

❖ Partner with high schools and four-year schools to support academic success across the continuum

❖ Institute proactive "retention alerts" earlier in the process (identifying and assisting at-risk students earlier)

❖ Apply the GECC stamp to transcripts when students complete the General Education core

❖ Use supplemental supports (academic software) for student learning outcomes

❖ Conduct exit interviews to understand why students leave

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis: College Completion	HELPFUL to Achieving Objectives	HARMFUL to Achieving Objectives
Internal Origin (attributes of the organization)	**Strengths** 1. Number of career and academic offerings (choice) 2. Affordability 3. Experience – we know what we're doing 4. Ration of full-time faculty to adjunct faculty 5. Institutional supports for student success 6. Student services and programming 7. Student life opportunities 8. Availability of administration to assist in resolving issues 9. Accessibility of scheduling courses for students 10. Childcare 11. Availability of scholarships and SSC Foundation as additional financial supports 12. Enhanced student access and communication through the student portal 13. Good technology and technology support 14. Services for students with disabilities 15. Class size	**Weaknesses** 1. Not updating career and academic offerings for relevancy 2. Safety/threat issues (perception in the community, faculty/student perception, communication regarding safety/threat issues) 3. Lack of identified shared resources for transfer and matriculation 4. SSC not perceived as an excellent academic institution 5. SSC viewed more as high school than college 6. Not offering courses on Saturdays (Fridays) 7. Cancelled classes interfering with degree completion 8. Inconsistent phone communications with students regarding class cancellations 9. Lack of class alternatives for working and advanced students 10. Customer service 11. Scheduling not offered with student completion in mind 12. Lack of direct student support in online courses 13. Assumption that everybody knows and understands technology
External Origin (attributes of the environment)	**Opportunities** 1. Scheduling 2. Remove barriers in the student portal 3. Advertising student programs and opportunities 4. Improving customer service 5. We can all be advisors for certificate and degree completion 6. Identify our constituents 7. Develop more pipelines/pathways for	**Threats** 1. Declining high school graduates 2. Resistance to change 3. Lower growth rates in the community 4. General economic decline in Chicago Southland 5. Ill-prepared students 6. Lots of competition for students

completion 8. Eliminate unnecessary restrictions 9. Streamline developmental progression for students 10. Adopt proven best practices, e.g. Complete College America.org 11. "Umbrella-ing" college programs so students acquire flexible skills 12. Award as much eligible credit as possible 13. Award prior learning/competency-based credit (see LearningCounts.org) 14. Provide incentives for completers (see CompletetheDegree.org, KnowHow2GoKY.org) 15. Use data to drive decisions 16. Use of universal design	7. Age of our facility 8. Negative aesthetics 9. Age of our students 10. Decrease in eligible residents 11. Decisions based upon reaction, not proactive based upon data 12. Decrease in funding 13. Biggest feeder high school district has a number of issues 14. GSU switching to a four-year institution 15. Over-saturation of students for certain careers 16. Lack of student housing (homelessness) 17. Lack of more targeted advertising 18. Lack of reinforced notion that college is expected 19. Need for continuing planned faculty and staff development

D. Closing Skill Gaps

1. Discussion Panel Themes

❖ There is a vacuum of data and dialogue around skill gap issues. SSC should take a leadership role and convene employers, other colleges, economic development, and workforce development to better understand skill gaps in the region. Public/private partnerships with a regional focus are critical.

❖ Must understand what the key industry sectors are, what their workforce needs are, and how we should re-tool/adjust to better meet those needs.

❖ It was noted that while employers must be at the table, they don't trust us yet. Employer relationship-building and ongoing engagement must be formalized. We must build the business case/return on investment for employers to work with us beyond just serving on program Advisory Committees and Workforce Investment Boards.

❖ Soft skills (customer service, work ethic, attitude, communication, time management, and team player skills) have been identified as a significant gap. Use capstone projects and internships to build students' skills in these areas.

❖ Consider offering cross-training and credentialing in multiple industry sectors (e.g. healthcare and information technology).

❖ Must focus on building career pathways. For example, ADN nurses must transition to BSN programs (and beyond) in order to meet regional workforce needs and be competitive in the marketplace.
- Consider granting some level of credit for industry certifications to help students advance in career pathways.

❖ Manufacturing is important to the region; new opportunities with re-shoring/on-shoring. SSC is a key partner in the Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership.

❖ Noted challenge: Potential academic faculty resistance to a focus on careers.

❖ See report on STEM Careers in Illinois.

2. Break-Out Group Discussion Themes

Major Themes

❖ Employer engagement priorities:
- Identifying skill and credential needs by industry (workforce needs analysis – at the regional level and at scale)
- Validating industry/workforce data
- Building internship/apprenticeship/contextual learning partnerships
- Validating training/graduate demand and surplus areas
- Mapping career pathways
- Addressing students' soft skill gaps

❖ Existing Advisory Boards are not working – need to revamp Advisory Board experience to make it more valuable for employers and also find other ways to build sustainable, ongoing relationships

❖ Building more short-term, stackable, modular, and responsive training and programs, including granting credit for industry certifications (competency-based credit and credentialing, prior learning assessment)

❖ Work better with outside organizations that are partnering with industry (in healthcare, manufacturing, criminal justice, law, etc.)

❖ Lack of communication between Advisory Boards/industry and student counseling/advising

❖ Must assess where we are over- and under-producing graduates and align programs and advising accordingly

❖ Need more collaboration with K-12 partners, including the expansion of dual credit

❖ Explore opportunities to blend programs, e.g. phlebotomy and EKG

❖ Improve collaboration and articulation between credit and non-credit

❖ The BCI can serve as the "R&D" arm for SSC: Testing programs in non-credit before they transition to credit

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis: Skill Gaps	HELPFUL to Achieving Objectives	HARMFUL to Achieving Objectives
Internal Origin (attributes of the organization)	**Strengths** 1. Good community reputation 2. BCI working with the community 3. Smaller class size 4. Qualified instructors with real-world experience 5. Student services 6. Curriculum resources 7. Professional contacts 8. Affordable, cost-effective education 9. Staff reputation 10. Rebound program	**Weaknesses** 1. Credit/non-credit communication and collaboration 2. Perception (poor) 3. Internship, apprenticeship, and service/applied learning is weak 4. Advising/counseling is not connected to labor market information, industry/occupational trends, etc. 5. Internal communication and collaboration
External Origin (attributes of the environment)	**Opportunities** 1. Expand and capitalize on the BCI model 2. Market quality of instruction/instructors, curriculum/programs 3. Get more involved with professional and industry organizations outside of the college 4. General marketing/outreach 5. Increase in high-performing (AP) students 6. Get creative with partnerships and resource alignment and leveraging	**Threats** 1. Lack of service learning and clinical opportunities – need to build industry/employer relationships 2. For-profit and other college competition – need to differentiate SSC 3. Loss of funding 4. Increased high school drop-out rates 5. Loss of students due to lack of internal communication, poor customer service

Part IV: Consensus Strategic Directions

On Day 2 of SSC's strategic planning retreat, each of the three planning sub-groups (increasing college readiness, improving college completion rates, and closing skill gaps) presented recommended strategic directions within its area of focus for inclusion in the eventual strategic plan. The full planning group then participated in a consensus-building exercise to refine and align strategic directions across all three planning areas. The group came to agreement upon the following five (5) draft recommended strategic directions[5]. Under several of the strategic directions are supporting notes, ideas, and/or potential strategies and tactics discussed during the planning retreat.

A. Enhancing College Readiness, Student Success, and College Completion

1. Shorten remediation time and accelerate transition to college-level coursework:
Reduce the time it takes students to advance from developmental education to college-level courses by ***X amount/percentage***[6] over the next five (5) years.

- ❖ Discussion notes and potential strategies/tactics:
    - ▪ Pursue faculty development as part of this process.
    - ▪ Strengthen partnerships with K-12 schools to address remediation and high school-to-college transition needs earlier (e.g. early assessment testing while students are still in high school, alignment between Common Core and college curriculum, etc.).
    - ▪ Enhance assessment and test preparation efforts, and make better use of available remediation tools (e.g. online tools) prior to testing students. Give students the opportunity to "brush up" during and prior to taking placement tests.
    - ▪ Make orientation mandatory rather than optional, and conduct orientation prior to placement testing.
    - ▪ Expand the OCS course model and have more students take OCS at the right time. Focus on building "student skills" and helping students "learn how to learn."
    - ▪ Examine SSC's current remediation model and determine what is and isn't effective, based upon data. Research and adopt alternate remediation models that have been proven to work. For example, these may include corequisite courses; modular models rather than full, semester-long remedial courses; targeted/more focused up-skilling based upon specific skill deficits; and enhanced embedded student supports in developmental education.
    - ▪ Analyze data to ensure that developmental education courses are in fact preparing students for college-level coursework. Better focus and align developmental education courses to later college-level course content and requirements.

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[5] Please note that SSC may ultimate decide to subsume Strategic Direction #5 as a strategy under another strategic direction, or retain it as a discrete, stand-alone strategic direction.
[6] SSC retreat participants determined that the target reduction amount should not be defined until relevant baseline data has been reviewed and analyzed.

2. Meet students where they are and use data and student supports to ensure timely completion:

Students of today and tomorrow will enter SSC where they are, and the college will engage them in an individualized, student-centered process to ensure **s**tudent **s**uccess and **c**ompletion that is based upon demonstrated best-practice models and is rigorously measured through outcomes assessment.

- ❖ Suggested goal: Increase completers by 25% over the next five (5) years.
- ❖ Discussion notes and potential strategies/tactics:
    - ▪ Include a dual focus on high-touch skill development supports as well as lower-touch, high-tech supports.
    - ▪ Focus on both individual student needs and the needs of various student cohort groups.
    - ▪ Incorporate intrusive advising and block scheduling to support students continuously until completion.

B. Closing Skill Gaps

3. Build meaningful engagement with all K-12 stakeholders:

Enhance collaboration with all K-12 stakeholders (district staff, guidance counselors, parents, students, etc.) to raise awareness about career opportunities at the certificate/associate degree level.

- ❖ Discussion notes and potential strategies/tactics:
    - ▪ Expand engagement with junior and high school students through efforts such as dual-credit programs, career exploration workshops for secondary students, etc.

4. Develop regional industry sector and career pathways partnerships:

In collaboration with regional partners, engage employers in targeted industry sectors in sustained relationships to identify, develop, and fill career pathways marked by relevant, workforce-driven certificates and degrees.

- ❖ Suggested goal: Increase completers by 25% over the next five (5) years.[7]
- ❖ Discussion notes and potential strategies/tactics:
    - ▪ Conduct workforce needs assessment for employers in targeted industries.
    - ▪ Conduct supply/demand analysis and align programs and curriculum, academic advising, and career counseling accordingly.
    - ▪ Enhance the availability and use of internships, apprenticeships, service learning, and contextualized learning.
    - ▪ Implement strategies to enhance the engagement level and functioning of Advisory Boards.

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[7] If SSC wishes to keep this completion goal or something similar to it, it may want to consider connecting the goal specifically to completions in programs of study that align to the identified workforce needs of targeted industry sectors. Alternatively, the college may wish to develop different goals related to efforts to address skill gaps.

- Expand the resource base for skills training through enhanced partnerships with other organizations and the pursuit of Federal grant funding and other funding (e.g. foundation funding).

5. Implement competency-based approaches:

Design and implement a competency-based, vs. program/course-based, approach to curriculum and credential design and development.[8]

- ❖ Discussion notes and potential strategies/tactics:
  - Example strategies may include expanded use of prior learning assessment for awarding credit; increased modularization/"chunking" of programs and courses and related development of stackable credentials awarded at shorter intervals; and development of more blended programs that integrate complementary skill sets across connected sectors and disciplines.

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[8] During the planning retreat, it was decided that SSC would later determine whether this strategic direction should remain as a stand-alone or be incorporated as a strategy under either Strategic Direction #2 or Strategic Direction #4. In addition, some retreat participants noted that there may be internal college policy barriers related to expanding the use of prior learning assessment. It was decided that SSC will explore this issue further in order to resolve any barriers that may exist.

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Part V: Recommendations for Moving Forward in the Planning Process

In this section, we describe a potential process for SSC to follow in developing its new strategic plan and tracking plan implementation process. We also offer SSC a template for a potential strategic plan outline.

A. Strategic Plan Development Process

The following discussion is intended to provide SSC with a potential process "road map" for developing the college's new strategic plan. The process includes key steps that SSC may wish to pursue in developing the critical elements of its new plan.

It is important to note that this process reflects a focus upon collaborative and inclusive plan content development, undertaken by a diverse group of college stakeholders. While assigning a smaller number of individuals to author the plan would very likely be less labor- and time-intensive, our experience has shown that a more collective approach to plan development fosters understanding, investment, and buy-in among the departments and personnel that will ultimately be charged with implementing the plan.

It is also important to highlight at the outset our recommendation that SSC first present the overarching strategic directions, as well as the strategic goals associated with each strategic direction, to the Board of Trustees, and then devote additional time to Strategic Plan Goal Team-based development of the more tactical and operational action steps that will support each strategic goal. In this model, SSC will obtain the Board's required approval and endorsement of the strategic directions and set of strategic goals – the core components of the strategic plan and presumably those of most interest to the Board – and will then spend further time crafting the more detailed and implementation-focused aspects of the plan. Again, it is our experience that a team-based approach to the development of action steps and related elements for each strategic goal delivers the best results in terms of support for implementation.

1.	President's Executive Team (for example, the Strategic Planning Steering and Core Teams) reviews and edits, as necessary, the strategic directions and develops initial strategic goals under each strategic direction
2.	President circulates updated strategic directions and goals to all college faculty and staff for input and buy-in
3.	President emails all college faculty and staff to ask for volunteers to work on Strategic Plan Goal Teams (one team per each strategic goal) • Ask for volunteers' top two Goal Team choices (note that it will likely be impossible to provide the top team choice to all volunteers)
4.	President's Executive Team reviews and finalizes the high-level plan (i.e. strategic directions and strategic goals; operational action steps will be crafted later by Goal Team members, as described below)
5.	President presents the high-level strategic plan (strategic directions and strategic goals) to the Board of Trustees for approval
6.	President and Executive Team identify "Goal Leaders" for each strategic goal • Goal Leaders are preferably selected from the volunteer list. However, if there is someone who would lead the goal best, they should be asked to serve.
7.	President personally invites Goal Leaders to serve • Goal Leaders should come from the faculty/administrator level • Faculty and Administrators should be encouraged to serve as Co-Leaders of Goal Teams • Goal Leader should not be responsible for the department under which the goal most generally fits (i.e. goal for business partnerships should not be led by the Vice President for Workforce Development). This ensures maximum "fresh" thinking.
8.	President calls a meeting with Goal Leaders to provide them their charge
9.	Goal Team members are selected from the college faculty and staff who volunteered in response the President's volunteer invitation email (Goal Leaders can help with the Team member selection or Team member selection can be facilitated ahead of time) • Goal Team members should be selected from various departments and positions throughout the college
10.	Goal Team members are invited to serve
11.	President sends an all-college memo announcing Goal Leaders and Goal Team members
12.	Goal Leaders coordinate a kick-off meeting for all Goal Team members • The President should try to attend this first meeting of the Teams • Goal Leaders will set meeting schedule with their Team members; Teams should meet at least monthly and possibly twice-monthly, with ongoing work and coordination in between regular meetings
13.	Goal Teams develop the action steps, timeframes, "owners" (i.e. individuals and departments/divisions primarily responsible for each action step), desired outcomes, and needed resources for each strategic goal
14.	Goal Leaders and Goal Teams continue and complete development of action steps, timeframes, etc. for each strategic goal
15.	President may choose to share the drafted plan with both internal and external stakeholders for their review and feedback
16.	Plan is finalized and presented to the Board of Trustees for adoption

Additional comments regarding strategic plan implementation:

- ❖ The President should meet quarterly with Goal Leaders through the strategic plan life cycle to assess progress and celebrate successes
    - Goal Teams should update the President quarterly, via a written report, regarding plan implementation progress
- ❖ The President should share regular (e.g. quarterly, once a semester, etc.) updates about plan implementation status with the full college community, with a particular focus on celebrating achievements and successes. The college may also wish to provide regular plan implementation updates to the external community, via regular reports, an online progress dashboard, etc.
- ❖ Action steps for each strategic goal may evolve over time; they should be updated throughout the plan life cycle

B. Strategic Plan Outline Template

The following outline is intended to provide SSC with a high-level framework for the college's development of its new strategic plan content. The plan outline includes four main components:

1. An introductory section, which discusses SSC's vision, mission, and values; describes the process the college pursued in crafting its new plan; and outlines the college's strategic directions as well as the strategic goals that correspond to each strategic direction;
2. A plan matrix and accompanying narrative that discusses the college's strategic directions and associated strategic goals, as well as the action steps, timeframes, parties primarily responsible for implementation of each strategic goal, etc.;
3. A section for discussion of how the college will track progress against the plan, connect plan implementation to other areas of institutional performance assessment, and report on plan implementation progress to both internal and external stakeholders; and
4. An appendix that lists the Strategic Goal Leaders and Strategic Goal Team members for each strategic goal in the plan.

Potential Plan Outline

I. Introduction

A. SSC's Vision, Mission, and Values

B. Overview of the Plan Development Process: *Summary of SSC's approach and activities in developing the new strategic plan, including the focus on engaging external stakeholders in community-centered planning. This section should include a compelling discussion about the college's innovative approach to strategic planning and its goals for institutional transformation and community impact.*

1. Early Plan Development Activities: *The college's activities early in the planning process*

2. Environmental Scan: Stakeholder Survey and Economic and Workforce Data and Program Gap/Surplus Analysis: *Soliciting input from internal and external stakeholders and using data to understand the regional "landscape" and help drive planning*

3. Strategic Planning Retreat – February 2014: *Engaging internal and external stakeholders in discussion; developing strategic directions in the areas of college readiness, college completion, and closing skill gaps*

4. Post-Retreat Plan Development Activities: *SSC's plan development activities since the February 2014 planning retreat*

C. Summary of Strategic Directions and Associated Strategic Goals: *Note that five strategic directions in the areas of college readiness, college completion, and closing skill gaps were developed by consensus during the February 2014 planning retreat. Following the initial development of strategic directions, the college then crafted strategic goals that align to each strategic direction. Strategic directions and associated goals are summarized here, and discussed in fuller detail in Part II of the plan.*

II. Strategic Directions, Goals, and Implementation Plans

Under each strategic direction, list and discuss associated strategic goals, as well as action steps, responsible parties, timeframes/milestones, needed resources/partners, and desired outcomes for each strategic goal.

III. Accountability and Transparency in Plan Implementation

This section should include a discussion of how SSC intends to track progress against plan goals and action steps; connect implementation of plan priorities to other areas of institutional performance management (e.g. employee performance evaluation); and report on plan implementation progress to both internal and external stakeholders.

IV. Appendix: Strategic Goal Leaders and Strategic Goal Team Members

This section is designed to recognize the Goal Team Leaders and Goal Team Members that served in developing plan content, and that are serving as champions for ongoing plan implementation.

Part VI: Appendix – Detailed Strategic Planning Retreat Agenda

Strategic Planning Retreat Objectives

The guiding vision for South Suburban College's (SSC) strategic planning process is a commitment to supporting student success and advancing community prosperity. The overarching objective of the SSC strategic planning retreat is to obtain broad and deep input from internal and external college stakeholders to inform the development of the college's new strategic plan and its future investments and activities. Retreat participants will collaborate in the development of recommended directions for SSC's strategic plan in the following areas:

- ❖   Increasing college readiness;
- ❖   Improving college completion rates; and
- ❖   Closing skill gaps.

Supporting areas of focus for the retreat include the college's roles in advocacy, accountability, and policy and investment.

Day 1: Wednesday, February 12, 2014

7:00 – 8:00	**Hot Breakfast Buffet**
8:00 – 8:15	**President's Welcome and Charge:** Don Manning, President, South Suburban College
8:15 – 8:45	**Keynote Address:** Dr. Harry Berman, Executive Director, Illinois Board of Higher Education
8:45 – 9:15	**Setting the Context for Strategic Planning:** Rick Maher, President & CEO, Maher & Maher
9:15 – 10:15	**Discussion Panel #1: Increasing College Readiness** Dr. Creg Williams, Superintendent, District 215 Dr. Bill Kendall, Superintendent, District 228 Tom Porter, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, District 205 Jennifer Foster, Associate Vice President for Adult Education and Workforce Development, Illinois Community College Board
10:15 – 10:30	**Break**
10:30 – 11:30	**Discussion Panel #2: Improving College Completion Rates** Gerald Doyle, Vice Provost, Illinois Institute of Technology Dr. Angela Henderson, Provost, Chicago State University Dr. Reinhold Hill, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Governors State University Genevieve Boesen, Executive Director, South Metropolitan Higher Education

	Consortium
	Dr. Linda Uzureau, Assistant to the President, Governors State University
11:30 – 12:30	**Discussion Panel #3: Closing Skill Gaps** Reggie Greenwood, Director of Economic Development, Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation Marla Hoyer-Lareau, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Patient Services, Franciscan St. Margaret Health Byron Zuidema, Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor–Employment and Training Administration Region 5/Chicago Lavon Nelson, Senior Director for Workforce Development, Illinois Community College Board
12:30 – 1:30	**Lunch**
1:30 – 2:00	**Orientation to Break-Out Group Process and Outcomes**
2:00 – 4:00	**Break-Out Group Discussions:** ■ Increasing College Readiness ■ Improving College Completion Rates ■ Closing Skill Gaps
4:00 – 4:30	**"In-Process" Review and Break-Out Group Report-Outs**
4:30	**Adjourn**

Day 2: Thursday, February 13, 2014

7:00 – 8:00	**Continental Breakfast**
8:00 – 8:30	**Welcome Back and Review of Day 2 Outcomes**
8:30 – 10:30	**Break-Out Group Discussions** *(continued)*
10:30 – 10:45	**Break**
10:45 – 12:00	**Break-Out Group Report-Outs and Discussion**
12:00 – 1:00	**Lunch**
1:00 – 2:45	**Gaining Consensus on Priority Strategic Directions**
2:45 – 3:00	**President's Closing Remarks**
3:00	**Adjourn**