



Academic Action Plan Framework

Draft: April 15, 2008

As a public institution, St. Cloud State University is committed to access, student success and community engagement. Our commitment to our public mission encourages us to identify and build upon our distinctive characteristics through a focused Academic Action Plan that will result in recognition for our University in the region and among our peers.

We believe that St. Cloud State has four distinctive characteristics, or sets of knowledge, strengths and qualities, that make us unique among our peers. The identification of these distinctive characteristics and the other elements of our Academic Action Plan Framework are the result of involvement by hundreds of members of the faculty, staff and administrators who spent countless hours developing departmental and college plans and work group reports. Our distinctive characteristics reflect four broad themes which emerged as the department and college plans and work group recommendation reports were analyzed.

Through our strategic planning process, we had previously outlined strategic priorities that align closely with those established by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System. These strategic priorities provide broad direction to the institution as we move forward and will be used as a framework for our other planning initiatives. The Academic Action Plan framework outlines specific objectives we must pursue in order to achieve our strategic priorities and realize our vision of transforming our students and our community, as well as a process for strategic investments that move us closer to our goals.

SCSU's Distinctive Characteristics

Accessibility that leads to success

As a regional comprehensive university, accessibility is at the core of our mission. St. Cloud State University will become distinctive by providing access to a high quality university education with a commitment to the success of each student. When we can meet with prospective students and make them a promise that "we know how to help you be successful in work and life" and then deliver on that promise, we will be among the best among our peers and will receive regional and national recognition. We will know we are committed to access when student outcomes instead of inputs are our key measure, and we have shifted resources from getting students to our University to keeping students at our University.

Character that reflects our region

By definition regional comprehensive institutions are tied to the regions we serve. St. Cloud State University will become distinctive by providing a portfolio of programs that reflects the character of our region with a commitment to meeting the needs of the community through student experiential

programs and applied research. When we can say with confidence to our regional partners that “we are expert at applying the knowledge of our university to the problems of our region” and our partners agree, we will be among the best in our class and will receive regional and national recognition. We will know we are committed to our region when it is measurably improved due to our partnerships and interactions, and our academic programs benefit from the unique strengths and resources of our area communities.

Education that drives knowledge into action

By charter, regional comprehensive universities occupy the space between a liberal arts college and a research I university. St. Cloud State University will become distinctive through the expert and innovative application of knowledge that provides our students with an education that prepares them for success in work and in life. When our students, employers, and regional partners recognize an education from St. Cloud State University prepares graduates to solve tomorrow’s problems, we will be among the top state universities in the upper Midwest and will receive regional and national recognition. We will know we excel at the application of knowledge when our alumni see their education from St. Cloud State University as critical to their ongoing success.

A portfolio of distinctive programs

A number of programs at St. Cloud State University have already gained a statewide or regional reputation for excellence. By taking advantage of regional opportunities, specialized expertise, strategic choice, or even through serendipity, our University has developed a portfolio of programs that are truly distinctive and will serve as the foundation from which will continue to build our institutional reputation. St. Cloud State University will become distinctive by building on and investing in our current strong academic programs and by making strategic investments in new programs and initiatives that hold the greatest promise of contributing to our academic reputation in the future.

Overarching university goal

To become the best comprehensive state university in the Upper Midwest, recognized by our peers as a leader in our region

Strategic Priorities

Enhancing Excellence: Provide a challenging, rich, global, and diverse curriculum and learning environment

St. Cloud State University’s first strategic priority focuses on building on our history of providing strong applied academic programs that are recognized professionally for their quality and by our students and alumni as critical for their continuing success. Through the Academic Action Plan, we recognize the imperative we have to build our capacity to meet the educational needs of our state and our region and the continuing education needs of professionals, while at the same time recognizing the shift that must occur around building and supporting a community of scholars as we move into doctoral education.

Enhancing excellence speaks directly to our Distinctive Characteristics “Education that drives knowledge into practice” and “A portfolio of distinctive programs.”

Enhancing Excellence Strategic Objectives

Expand the role of graduate and professional education

As the U.S. economy has shifted, so too have the career paths of many individuals. Most have found the key to professional advancement or continued employment is additional education, beyond the baccalaureate. Nationally, master’s degrees conferred grew by 46 percent, far exceeding growth in bachelor’s and doctoral degrees at American colleges and universities between 1995-96 and 2005-06. The number of graduate certificates conferred also has increased dramatically. Consistent with national trends, SCSU has seen a shift to more graduate FYEs in an era of increasing numbers of high school graduates. Projections for the state of Minnesota and many of its border states indicate declining numbers of high school graduates for the foreseeable future. If SCSU expects to maintain or grow enrollments, graduate and professional education may be the most viable source for that growth, especially with the new opportunities for masters and applied doctoral education.

Create and foster a community of scholars

SCSU faculty and departments clearly recognize that research and scholarship must be a vital part of our curriculum and that research and scholarship supports quality of teaching. Research and scholarship activities allow our faculty and students to engage in real-world problem solving, encouraging students to gain deeper insight into complex phenomena. SCSU should strive to be at a place where every student has the opportunity to fully participate in vital, publishable research and scholarship before they graduate and faculty have the institutional support they need to be active scholars in their disciplines. The universal benefits of research and scholarship activities that our graduates receive should be a vital part of their educational experience.

Build interdisciplinary programs and collaborations with clear research and service connection

The development of new academic programs is critical to the ongoing relevance of an institution and its curriculum. New academic programs come from many sources, including external mandates, disciplinary shifts, needs of specific student populations, and faculty research interest. Regional comprehensive universities have a limited financial capacity to support unlimited numbers of new programs. One approach to managing program growth is through the development of interdisciplinary programs that draw on the strengths of existing programs to develop new and innovative opportunities for curriculum, research, and service. Through the planning process, a number of departments identified interdisciplinary opportunities and Centers that could further the institutional mission, build on the strengths of their program, and help bring distinction to the University. Centers for new media, American Indian studies, Central Minnesota immigrant experiences, civic education, and sustainability are a few of the opportunities that hold great promise for SCSU.

Develop and implement a general education program that provides students with a solid educational foundation and aligns with the principles of the Association for American College’s & Universities Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) project

SCSU has a diverse set of institutional outcomes that includes the system-mandated Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, the new (draft) general education program, the five Core areas, Diversity and Racial Issues requirements, and the Student Life & Development outcomes. Even with the multitude of requirements,

SCSU does not have a single set of institutional outcomes that integrates the experience of students across academic and co-curricular units. AAC&U's "Essential Learning Outcomes" provides a useful model to align student learning outcomes in General Education, Student Life and Development, and major programs at SCSU.

Live into our global commitment

A relevant undergraduate or graduate education increasingly means providing students exposure to global perspectives that challenges them to think beyond provincial considerations to truly global implications. Global Perspectives is a component of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and will be an important component of SCSU's revised general education program. SCSU is recognized nationally among its peers in number of international students and number of students studying abroad. While the growth in international programming has been noteworthy, it has come haphazardly, without a clear vision for what international studies means at SCSU. This has resulted in inconsistent and uneven practices among programs and increased risk to the University as SEVIS and other reporting requirements have escalated as a result of regulatory changes since 9/11. SCSU has not provided the infrastructure or the staffing necessary to successfully respond to these new requirements – a situation that must be remedied if we are to live into our commitment to international education.

Develop and keep current flexible delivery systems

Non-traditional course delivery through on-line or distance programs is an area of potential growth for St. Cloud State University. Online enrollment has continued to increase at SCSU, to the point of becoming the largest online provider in the MnSCU system. Surprisingly this development has occurred without a clear vision and so is therefore sporadic, inconsistent, and not designed to take advantage of strategic program opportunities. As the number of "traditional" students in the state of Minnesota declines and the education needs of non-traditional and continuing education students grows, the University should develop academic programs that can be delivered to individuals by alternative means. These programs may be delivered via ITV, the web or at sites such as graduate center in Maple Grove. Additionally, the university needs to look beyond baccalaureate and graduate programs to other types of educational packages and credentials to meet student needs.

Create a School of Health Sciences within the College of Science & Engineering

The creation of the Nursing Program brought a new programmatic focus on health sciences and hundreds of pre-nursing students to St. Cloud State University. The increasing demand for health science related programs, particularly nursing, in our region and our state continues to grow as does the pressure from our constituencies to meet that need. SCSU has quickly developed a statewide reputation for the quality of our nursing program. Our reputation along with the construction of the science complex through the renovation of Brown Hall, the expansion of the Wick Science Center, and the construction of the Integrated Science and Engineering Laboratory Facility provides SCSU with a significant opportunity to reorganize and expand our programs related to health sciences into an organizational structure that will support their growth and meet the growing need of these professionals.

Expand Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) initiatives

State and federal governments have raised the profile of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and are looking to universities to recruit and graduate more students into traditional STEM careers. Job prospects for graduates are promising, as is the availability of research support for faculty. Developments that have influenced trends in STEM programs include an emphasis

on homeland security following the attacks of 9/11, an upgrading of required professional credentials in many health and related clinical fields, a focus on bio, computer, and manufacturing engineering as a key driver of the U.S. economy, and continued demand and popularity in fields such as business and computer and information sciences. The Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities have identified a goal of “increasing student engagement in STEM coursework by providing incentives for STEM faculty and teachers, improving the infrastructure for STEM programs, and developing STEM learning opportunities that meet current industry needs” as one of its Strategic Priorities for FY09, and SCSU must be prepared to respond.

Increase the brand value of the G.R. Herberger College of Business

St. Cloud State University has developed a statewide, and in some instances, regional reputation for high-quality business programs. The G.R. Herberger College of Business and its AACSB-accredited business programs have been a point of pride for the University, attracting significant numbers of freshman and transfer students to the institution. The programs of the G.R. Herberger College of Business account for nearly 25 percent of undergraduate degrees conferred and rank second behind the College of Education in the number of masters degrees conferred. The college’s MBA program has seen growth in numbers and reputation and has lead the institution into programmatic offerings in the northern metro area and will be the cornerstone of a Graduate Center in the Twin Cities. Moving the college to the renovated Centennial Hall and the continuing success of some of its high-profile graduates provides the University an opportunity to build upon the college’s strong reputation, a move that will benefit all programs at the University.

Develop and implement processes to provide strategic investments in critical programs

As we become more strategic in our actions, we also must become more strategic in our investments. Through the Academic Action Planning process, departments and work groups developed many recommendations to enhance existing programs and to develop new opportunities. While most were solidly grounded in our vision for the future, we have limited resources and must clearly prioritize our actions as we move forward. As part of the academic action planning process, the Integrated Planning & Budgeting work group developed a process for ensuring our strategic investments were made in ways that are open, transparent, and aligned closely with our strategic priorities. As we implement our Academic Action Plan, we must refine our resource allocation processes and expand our opportunities to develop alternative funding streams to fund our strategic priorities.

Expanding opportunity: Improve access, satisfaction and success of all our students, especially those who are underrepresented or traditionally underserved by higher education

St. Cloud State University’s second strategic priority focuses on delivering on our promise of access and opportunity in a way that leads to individual student success. Through the Academic Action Plan, we recognize the critical need to reexamine our definition of student success and to place that definition at the center of the operation of our University. This will occur though a thorough evaluation of how we support and nurture our students throughout their time at St. Cloud State University, with particular attention to the unique needs of those students who are underrepresented in higher education or are outside of the “traditional” definition of college students. “Expanding Opportunity” speaks directly to our Distinctive Characteristic of “Accessibility that leads to success.”

Expanding Opportunity Strategic Objectives

Develop an integrated student experience that provides support from enrollment to graduation

The mission and public expectation of higher education has changed dramatically from when Harvard opened its doors in 1636 to prepare gentlemen for life in the ministry. Today, higher education in general and universities in particular are the great equalizer in American society. The path to the middle class for many, including first-generation and historically underrepresented student groups, is through universities – public, regional comprehensive universities specifically. The public and students and their families are investing in universities through state funding and increasing levels of tuition because of this promise, and it is imperative that we deliver at far greater levels than we currently are or we risk losing their trust and support. St. Cloud State University must take greater responsibility for each student that matriculates at our institution by developing an integrated student experience that provides ongoing student support and assistance from enrollment to graduation and beyond.

Strengthen and align student academic support services

Trends in education indicate that more students are enrolling at universities underprepared to complete collegiate level work, particularly in the areas of mathematics and composition. For many years, incoming students have been required to demonstrate mathematics proficiency by completing a math placement exam. Statistics indicate that more than 40 percent of our incoming freshmen require some form of remedial mathematics coursework. Beginning this fall, incoming students also will be required to demonstrate proficiency in English. The university is preparing for the academic support requirements of those students who do not score well enough to be placed in English 191. While the support requirements for math and English are significant, they do not include the many additional students who need assistance with study strategies or other strategies to ease the transition to a collegiate environment or who require tutoring in other academic areas. Strengthening our advising system and other academic support services will be necessary to ensure our students are successful in their future studies at SCSU.

Embrace and foster diversity on campus

Issues of diversity are impacting organizations and institutions across the country as structures and policies that were originally developed for a white, majority population are being stretched and reformed to accommodate the changing demographics of our society. Minnesota's demographics, while still predominately white, are shifting as well, with students of color making up all of the growth in high school populations and new immigrant populations testing our K-12 school system and service agencies. The central Minnesota region has not been isolated from these changes and is looking to St. Cloud State University to provide leadership and guidance on how to become a supportive and successful multicultural community. It is imperative that SCSU becomes a leader in our region on issues of diversity and model what it means to be a truly anti-racist organization.

Enriching community: Engage in partnerships that contribute to the well being and stability of the University and the central Minnesota community

St. Cloud State University's third strategic priority focuses on building on our existing and developing collaborations with our partners in central Minnesota and the region. Through the Academic Action

Plan, we recognize the increasing need to expand our commitment to civic and community engagement for the benefit of our students through expanded opportunities for experiential learning, our faculty through expanded opportunities for applied research, and our community when SCSU focuses its energies on addressing the problems of the region. “Enriching Community” speaks directly to our Distinctive Characteristic of “Character that Reflects our Region.” We will be distinctive when the character of our University reflects our region, and we become recognized by our constituencies as playing a vital role in their continued success.

Enriching Community Strategic Objectives

Institutionalize our commitment to civic and community engagement and education

In seeking to better align the University with the communities we serve, SCSU needs to actively commit to public engagement that enhances our ability to respond to the needs of our region. As a regional comprehensive university, we have a responsibility to serve the needs of our state and region in ways that allow us to turn knowledge into practices that benefit our community partners and to provide our students experiential learning opportunities that instill in them commitment to civic and community engagement that will continue for the rest of their lives.

Develop and strengthen preK-16 partnerships

St. Cloud State University’s roots are deeply embedded in teacher education. From our beginning as the Third State Normal School, we have been a leader in teacher preparation in Minnesota and the nation. We will continue our commitment to preparing accomplished teachers and educational administrators who are ready to become the leaders in tomorrow’s schools. But the complexities and realities of the preK-12 system, including changing social, economic, and demographic shifts, have made it imperative that our University engages with regional school districts at an unprecedented level, to help districts address the needs of their students today so they can be prepared to enter postsecondary education in the future.

Elevating practice: Innovate and continuously improve to provide our students with the best possible education and to meet future opportunities and challenges

St. Cloud State University’s fourth strategic priority focuses on building on our institutional capacity to meet the changing needs of our students, our disciplines and the state of Minnesota. Through the Academic Action Plan, we recognize the increasing need to evaluate and improve how we do business and invest in our people, our infrastructure and our facilities in ways that align with our strategic priorities. “Elevating Practice” directly supports all four of our Distinctive Characteristics in that it ensures we continue our pursuit of excellence through ongoing innovation and continuous improvement.

Elevating Practice Strategic Objectives

Recruit, develop, and retain a high-quality work force

As a community of professionals, our greatest asset and most significant financial investment is in human resources. The delivery of education is a uniquely human endeavor and is only as good as the knowledge and experience of the individuals providing the curricular content and student programming. The University and its employees have a joint responsibility to ensure that our faculty remain current in

their disciplines, our professional staff understand best practices in their fields, and our support staff have the necessary skills to deliver on our promise of educational excellence and opportunity. We also have an obligation to be a leader in our community in hiring a diverse work force that provides employment opportunities for all so that our work force reflects the changing demographics of our region. A large number of projected retirements provide an opportunity for recruiting a workforce that is more representative of the community's population. An institutionally focused and consistently enacted employee recruitment, retention and development program will develop a university community that is characterized by mutual respect and effective collaboration that embodies the institution's strategic priorities and core values.

Develop our planning and data infrastructure to support continuous improvement

Developing our Academic Action Plan is just the first step in moving our University toward its goal of becoming the best comprehensive state University in the Upper Midwest. As we begin to implement our plan, we need to continually monitor our progress toward our goals and make adjustments along the way. Enhancing our planning and data infrastructure will allow us to expand our commitment to evidence-based planning, to better understand the needs of our students and stakeholders, and to align programs and resources in ways that will allow us ensure the success and sustainability of our University into the future.

Develop ability to project enrollment and student demand and model staffing levels

Human resources is and will continue to be the greatest investment made by St. Cloud State University. As student populations and their needs and aspirations shift over time, it is critical that we develop the capabilities to model those shifts and increase our ability to adjust staffing levels accordingly.

Implement the vision of the comprehensive technology plan

Staying current with technology is a challenge facing institutions of higher education across the country. As technology is an integral part of the majority of disciplines and in the delivery of education, St. Cloud State University needs to plan for and invest in the discipline-specific technologies and learning spaces that address the ongoing pedagogical and research requirements of departments and units. The current revision of the SCSU Technology Master Plan will be strengthened by a campus-wide conversation about technology and pedagogy and by the completion of the Academic Action Plan providing a focus for future technology investments.

Create the space we need to house the programs we need for the future

The completion of the Academic Action Plan prior to the development of the Comprehensive Facilities Plan is critical to ensuring that our academic and student support programs drive the development and renovation of buildings on our campus, including equipment, and infrastructure targeted toward research and scholarship. After the Academic Action Plan is completed and as it is revised and updated, it will be necessary to develop a process of ongoing alignment between the two documents to ensure that academic and student support requirements drive facilities development into the future.

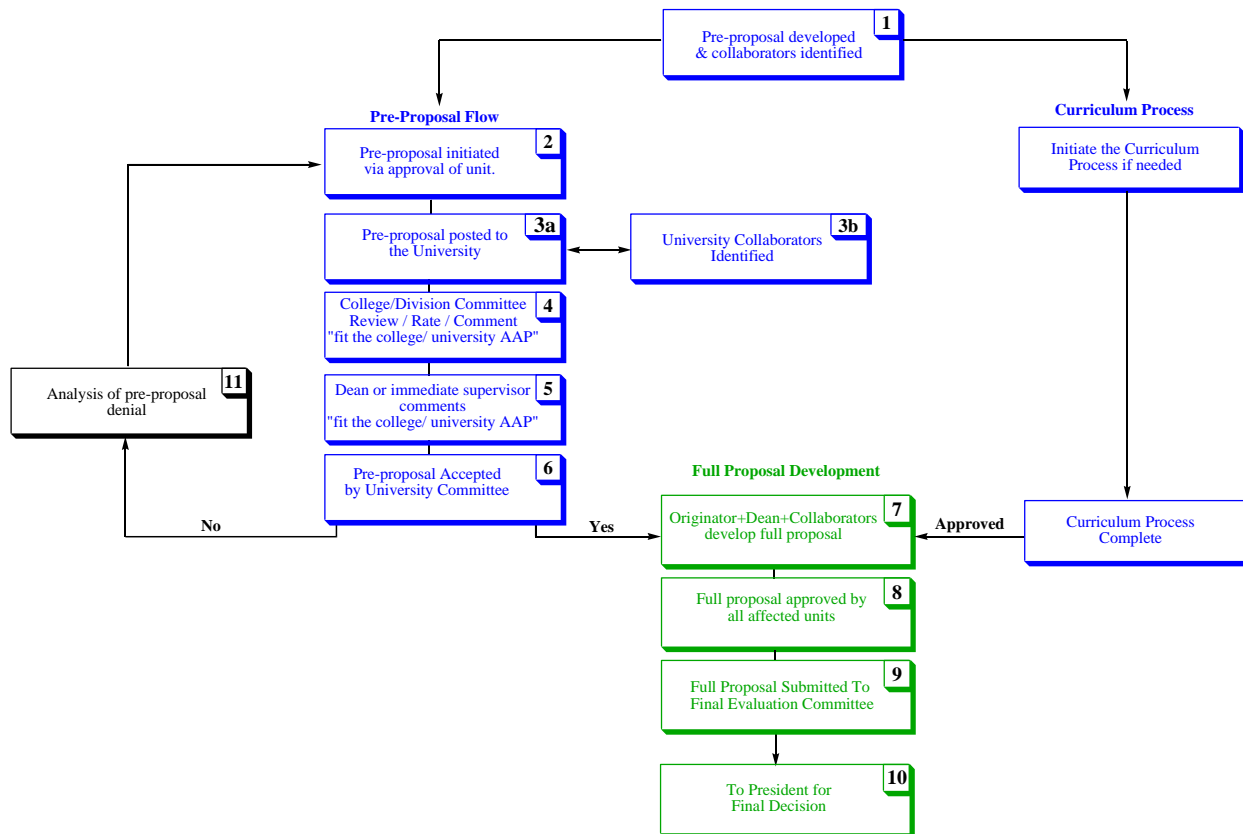
Proposal Evaluation Criteria

As part of the Academic Action Planning process, departments and units have begun to think about their own strategic opportunities and choices. Likewise, the Academic Action Planning work groups spent considerable time thinking of tactical, next steps to move our University forward. The result of their efforts was a rich list of initiatives and proposals, many of which will require investments of time or money from SCSU. While the vast majority of ideas that came forward have great potential, the reality of our institution is that we have finite resources to commit to these activities. In order to more fairly and accurately compare the different proposed initiatives or programs, a set of criteria were developed that could be used to identify the highest priorities. The criteria also will provide guidance for programs and units as they more fully develop future proposals that require University investment.

[See Criteria Attachment]

Proposal Funding Process (Proposed)

The following proposed process was developed for the distribution of resources that are specifically earmarked for strategic initiative investment. A second process that describes a revision to the overall budgeting process appears on the Academic Action Planning web site.



Proposal development narrative (Proposed)

1) Develop pre-proposal using the supplied forms. Identify potential collaborators across campus. All potential collaborators should be involved in discussion at the point. Curriculum changes should be initiated via the curriculum process at this time.

2) Appropriate department/program/division should officially approve the pre-proposal via the signature form provided. All effected departments/programs/divisions/ should be included.

3a) Pre-proposal will be electronically posted to a controlled access university site.

3b) Additional collaborators are identified and brought into the discussion. Interested individuals initiate dialogue with originators in an effort to establish potential collaborative efforts.

4) Representative committee of the dean or immediate supervisor and representatives from all departments/programs/divisions in the originators college or division review, rate, and comment on pre-proposals. The representatives of this committee should be chosen by each department/program/division and not appointed by the dean or immediate supervisor. The pre-proposal will be rated using the forms provided. All pre-proposals are forwarded with these ratings and comments.

5) The dean or immediate supervisor comments on the fit for the college and university academic action plan. Specific comments regarding how the pre-proposal moves the college forward should be included.

6) This university wide committee should be broad in scope (similar to the current strategic planning committee) and include all vice-presidents and academic deans. The make up of this committee will be subject to the meet and confer process.

7) Yes decision means the development of full proposal by the originator, collaborators, and respective dean or immediate supervisor using the forms provided. A no decision means originator and collaborators must analyze feedback and make appropriate modifications. See step #11.

8) Appropriate department/program/division should officially approve the pre-proposal via the signature form provided. All effected departments/programs/divisions/ should be included.

9) The same committee evaluating the pre-proposals in step # 6, will evaluate the full proposals. Proposals will be ranked according to funding priority. Approved proposals that are not funded, should be fully reevaluated (starting at step #1) after two years.

10) Funding recommendations forwarded to the president for final decision.

11) Originators and collaborators analyze decision and make appropriate modifications prior to resubmission. Proposal can only be submitted 1 time per decision cycle.