

Plan for Enhancing Student Success  
at St. Cloud State University  
2006-2011

Developed by the Committee on Student Success  
Spring 2006

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## Part I: Background and Plan Development Process

SCSU's retention and graduation rates have been issues of growing concern at St. Cloud State University. Recent public comparisons of the institution's rates to other 4-year universities in Minnesota has compelled the campus community to consider a more comprehensive approach to improving the success of its students.

Increasing student retention and graduation rates is addressed explicitly in SCSU's Strategic Plan under the Service Community theme. It states: "The University will emphasize and support services and activities that lead to higher retention, satisfaction and success for students, faculty, and staff."

In addition to the Strategic Planning Committee, the success of students was the focus of planning efforts of a number of groups on campus, including Enrollment Management, Student Government Association, Academic Affairs Council, and the Faculty Task Force on Student Completion.

In response to the growing interest in enhancing the student experience at the University, St. Cloud State University President Roy H. Saigo created the Committee on Student Success, which included representatives from each of the planning groups, to develop a comprehensive plan for enhancing student success at St. Cloud State University as measured through increases in student retention and graduation rates.

The plan contained in this document was the result of the combined efforts of more than 40 members of the SCSU community (see Appendix B for committee list). It was developed through two planning retreats and included an interim report that was shared with the campus community for discussion and feedback (see Appendix B for Interim Report).

Five issues were identified during the first planning retreat. They were:

1. **A More Prepared Student Population:** There is a gap between faculty expectations and students' knowledge of the academic culture of the institution. Many students do not know what is expected of them at the college level. Many of our students don't know how to make conceptual connections and have difficulty acquiring the kind of academic skills necessary to succeed in college. For example, 50% of SCSU's incoming freshman must take developmental math. This leads to situations where students feel intimidated and fearful. Whose responsibility is it to prepare these students for the academic challenges they will face?
2. **A Flexible, Integrated Response:** When students are facing challenges, it is important they understand that quitting is not their only option. There are people and resources on campus that can help them work through their issue. SCSU has a number of resources already in place to help students deal with issues they face or with any "failures" they encounter.
3. **A Holistic Approach to Advising:** SCSU students need assistance in designing an academic path that takes them beyond their general education and major coursework to a clearer understanding of their life and/or career goals after college.
4. **An Engaged Student Population:** College students that have a sense of community and connection to their institution are more likely to persist and graduate. NSSE tells us that our

students are not as engaged as students at peer institutions. SCSU has a breadth of student organizations and programming opportunities, but students do not take advantage of the offerings already provided. Being a part of a cohort increases the opportunity for engagement, but not all students are currently part of a formal cohort. How do we reach those students that are not part of a cohort, and how do we encourage students to engage with the institution and each other?

5. **A Stronger University Community:** An engaged student body must begin with an engaged faculty, staff and administration, but SCSU seems to lack that sense of community. It is felt there is a disconnect between faculty, staff, and students outside of the classroom and that the institution does not always model the values and ways of thinking and being that is expected of its students.

The purpose of the second retreat was to focus on identifying institutional goals around student success, specific activities necessary to achieve those goals, and performance measures that will be used to judge the success of those activities and to adjust the plan in the future. Comments received from the campus community after the first retreat were incorporated into the committee's work in developing the final planning document.

The intent is to have the Plan for Enhancing Student Success serve as a component of the institution's Strategic Plan under the Service Community theme. The plan's success will be tracked through identified performance measures, and discussions will occur annually through the Strategic Planning and Annual Work Plan processes on the adjustments that need to be made to the plan based on performance results.

## Part II: Plan Overview

Three major goals were identified as critical to enhancing student success at SCSU. A number of associated recommendations were recognized as necessary to achieve each goal.

*Goal 1: Students will feel more prepared to succeed at SCSU and will feel more positive and satisfied with their college experience.*

1. Develop a University-wide response to better support under prepared and academically at-risk students
2. Provide a seamless transition to University life by coordinating summer advising and registration activities, new student orientation activities, and campus social and cultural events
3. Create a university-wide tutoring center where students can go to receive help, especially in the first two years
4. Expand opportunities for students to become members of a campus cohort including the expansion of the first-year experience program
5. Conduct an analysis of the adequacy of SCSU's housing facilities and a feasibility study on implementing an on-campus residency requirement.

*Goal 2: SCSU will provide students with the information and communication they need at the right time and from the right people which will contribute to their academic success.*

1. Create an effective advising program for all students that includes connecting them to meaningful career and effective student services
2. Develop initiatives to provide regular, accurate, and seamless communication with students

*Goal 3: University members will be professionals engaged in the shared work of the university. They will feel respected, valued, and heard. They will be able to laugh together, listen together, build relationships, participate in the decision making processes, and offer criticism without fear of recrimination.*

1. Promote a supportive campus climate that encourages engagement and respect

**Implementation Note:** It is the sentiment of the planning group that it is necessary to assign responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the student success plan to one office. Upon review of the goals and recommendations identified by the group, nearly all of the activities identified would fall under the direction of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. It is our recommendation that the Dean be made responsible for the successful implementation of the full plan, working with impacted offices outside of Undergraduate Studies as necessary.

### Part III: Plan Details

*Goal 1: Students will feel more prepared to succeed at SCSU and will feel more positive and satisfied with their college experience.*

<b>Recommendation One:</b> Develop a University-wide response to better support under prepared and academically at-risk students			
1	Develop a safety net for academically at-risk students, including students below the 60 <sup>th</sup> percentile of their high school class rank		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Completion of plan
			Retention rate of students below 60 <sup>th</sup> percentile
			Graduation rate of students below 60 <sup>th</sup> percentile
2	Send a computer-generated audit to all students at the end of their first year and again at the end of their second year concerning the General Education courses yet to be completed		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Records & Registration	<i>Timeline:</i> Spring 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Average # of credits completed before completing Gen. Ed. coursework (TBD)
4	Implement an automated system for enforcing course prerequisites		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Records & Registration	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			% of seats in courses w/prerequisite held by students w/out required prerequisite
5	Identify students, especially nontraditional students, who need developmental help		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Retention rate of students receiving developmental help
6	Identify courses for which the failure rate is significantly above the university average and develop a Supplemental Instructional program for those courses		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2009	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Passage rate of students receiving vs. not receiving supplemental instruction

<b>Recommendation Two:</b> Provide a seamless transition to University life by coordinating summer advising and registration activities, new student orientation activities, and campus social and cultural events	
1	Design and implement a New Student Orientation program that introduces students to the academic, cultural, and social life of the University

	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies and Student Life & Development	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measure:</i>
			Student satisfaction measure
			1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year retention rate
			Participation and usage rates of campus services
2	Require a college transition course to outline what is expected of students academically and as a way to connect the entire incoming class		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year retention rate
			Student preparedness measure on Faculty/Staff survey
3	Develop a system to coordinate all activities intended for first year students		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies	<i>Timeline:</i> Spring 2007	<i>Assessment:</i>
			1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> year retention rate
			FYE survey

<b><i>Recommendation Three:</i></b>			
Create a university-wide tutoring center where students can go to receive help, especially in the first two years.			
1	Develop and implement plan for a university-wide tutoring center on campus, including staffing and budget implications		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Learning Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measure:</i>
			Student usage rates
			Persistence rate of students using Tutoring Center each semester (TBD)
2	Develop an accredited tutor training program for any student involved in tutoring on campus.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Learning Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measure:</i>
			Completion of the program

<b><i>Recommendation Four:</i></b>			
Expand opportunities for students to become members of a campus cohort including the expansion of the first-year experience program			
1	Expand First Year Experience program to include all NEF students through growth in the number of interdisciplinary learning communities and creation of First Year Interest Groups based on specific majors and student interests outside the classroom.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2010	<i>Performance measure:</i>
			Number of FYE participants

			1 <sup>st</sup> to 2 <sup>nd</sup> yr retention rates
			FYE survey (satisfaction level)
2	Develop opportunities to create connections within majors beyond classroom experience to enhance the students' sense of belonging		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Colleges	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2006	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Graduating senior survey
			Major program completion rates
			Graduation rates
3	Provide physical space in departments for majors for group processes/projects		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Administrative Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2006	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Graduating senior survey
			Major program completion rates
			Graduation rate
4	Design a program to connect transfer and non-traditional students to the University		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies and Student Life & Development	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Transfer student program completion rates
			Non-traditional student program completion rates
			Graduating senior survey
			Non-traditional student survey (TBD)

**Goal 2:** SCSU will provide students with the information and communication they need at the right time and from the right people which will contribute to their academic success.

<b>Recommendation Five:</b>			
Create an effective advising program for all students that includes connecting them to meaningful career counseling and effective student services.			
1	Develop an advising education program that will identify, recruit and train a cohort of faculty who are committed to academic and career advising.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Advising Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			NSSE Survey (Advising section)
			Student satisfaction surveys
2	Create small, accountable departmental advising centers. Build in an infrastructure that connects departments and Career Services to integrate academic and career advising.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Colleges and Advising Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Spring 2008	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			NSSE survey (Advising section)
			Graduating Senior Survey

			Major program completion rates
3	Develop a program to recognize and reward excellence in student advising.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Advising Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			NSSE Survey (Advising section)
			Graduating Senior Survey
4	Create a campus-wide advising day each semester to enable student to meet with their advisor, check their progress in general education, complete application for their major, etc.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			NSSE Survey (Advising section)
			Graduating Senior Survey
			Major program completion rates
5	Update the Application to Major Program of Study policy to allow academically prepared NEFs to apply directly to their major and implement and enforce the 80-credit limit for major application provision.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2006	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Graduation rate of each NEF cohort accepted directly into the major
			Graduation rate overall
			Avg. number of credits completed when accepted in the program (overall and by program)
6	Develop a contract with students that guarantees they can finish in 4 years, as long as they meet certain requirements and follow their academic plan		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Academic Affairs	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			% of NEF cohort participating in program
			4-yr graduation rate of those participating in the program

<b><i>Recommendation Six:</i></b>			
<b>Develop initiatives to provide regular, accurate, and seamless communication with students</b>			
1	Develop a "One-Stop" student services program with expanded access to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Undergraduate Studies	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Usage rates of "One-Stop" services by type (in person, web portal, phone bank)
			Student satisfaction data
2	Develop a resource guide that faculty and staff can use in working with and/or advising students that explains how to connect students with assistance.		

	<i>Responsibility:</i> Advising Center	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2006	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Frequency of web usage
			Resource guide usefulness and utilization measures on Faculty/Staff survey
			NSSE survey (Advising measure)
			Graduating senior survey

**Goal 3:** *University members will be professionals engaged in the shared work of the university. They will feel respected, valued, and heard. They will be able to laugh together, listen together, build relationships, participate in the decision making processes, and offer criticism without fear of recrimination.*

<b><i>Recommendation Six:</i></b>			
<b>Promote a campus climate that encourages engagement and respect</b>			
1	Expand deliberative dialogues that run across disciplines in order to cross boundaries and increase our knowledge about each other in a professional environment.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2006	<i>Performance measure:</i>
			Participation rate at CETL events
2	Conduct a regular survey of faculty, staff, and student satisfaction and find ways of being responsive.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Institutional Effectiveness	<i>Timeline:</i> Spring 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			Faculty/staff satisfaction measure
4	Find ways of integrating ideas about learning communities and culture into our institutional profile and activities		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2009	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			To be developed by CETL
5	Establish a New Faculty Orientation program that introduces faculty to various programs and services on campus.		
	<i>Responsibility:</i> Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	<i>Timeline:</i> Fall 2007	<i>Performance measures:</i>
			To be developed by CETL

## Appendix A: Planning Committee Members

Addie Turkowski, Director, Career Services  
Annette Schoenberger, Computer Science, President-Elect Faculty Assn.  
BernaDette Wilson, Associate Vice President, Student Life & Development  
David Boyer, Philosophy; Director, University Honors Program  
David DeGroot, Dean, College of Science & Engineering  
David Warne, Advising Center, Communication Studies  
Frank Loncorich, Director, Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid  
Frankie Condon, English, Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning  
Guihua Li, Director, Institutional Research & Planning  
Jim Knutson-Kolodzne, Director, American Indian Center  
Joanna Pucell, Communication Studies  
Judy Kilborn, English; President, SCSU Faculty Association  
Judy Litterst, Communication Studies, General Education Committee  
Julie Condon, Coordinator, College English as a Second Language  
Kate Steffens, Interim Dean, College of Education  
Larry Christenson, Director, Residential Life  
Les Green, Director of Cultural Diversity, College of Education  
Lisa Helmin Foss, Asst. Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness  
Mahmoud Saffari, Assoc. Vice President, Enrollment Management  
Margo Thomas, Director, Center for Student Organization Leadership Development  
Mark Nook, Dean, Undergraduate Studies  
Mike Pesch, Interim Dean, College of Business  
Pat Krueger, Associate Director of Admissions  
Robert Johnson, Ethnic Studies  
Rod Dobe, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Sport Science  
Roland Specht-Jarvis, Dean, College of Fine Arts & Humanities  
Ron Seibring, Director, Campus Recreation  
Sandra Johnson, Mathematics  
Sandra Williams, Learning Resources & Technology Services  
Sharon Cogdill, Interim Dean, College of Social Sciences  
Shahzad Ahmad, Director, Multicultural Student Services  
Steve Casanova, Director, Multicultural Resource Center  
Steven Jenkins, Counseling & Psychological Services  
Steve Klepetar, English, Director, University Advising Center  
Sue Bayerl, Director, Records & Registration  
Susan Motin, Learning Resources & Technology Services

## Appendix B:

### Student Success Retreat

#### A Summary of the Key Issues:

Following is a summary of the key issues surrounding increasing student success at St. Cloud State University. The summary was created by grouping comments made during the visioning and barrier identification exercises into common issues. The narrative following each issue is a compilation of the various statements about the issue.

#### Issue 1: A Flexible, Integrated Response

*"We need to work as a whole university."*

When students are facing challenges, it is important they understand that quitting is not their only option. There are people and resources on campus that can help them work through their issue. SCSU has a number of resources already in place to help students deal with issues they face or with any "failures" they encounter. Four challenges exist that result in the resources being underutilized by students.

First, each student has unique needs or is facing a combination of different issues. The university needs to provide a better coordinated, more flexible response that can be tailored to the needs of each student.

Second, many students, faculty, and staff are unaware of what resources are available and/or how to access them.

Third, the university has a silo mentality when it comes to working with students. Currently, faculty and Student Life & Development staff do not necessarily trust each other and sometimes advise students away from working with offices because of a lack of trust. The SCSU academic, student life, social, and cultural areas need to be better connected, and those connections need to be better articulated to students.

Fourth, the university is not adequately addressing the needs of non-traditional and/or commuter students.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Develop a resource guide or policy and procedures manual that faculty and staff can use in working with and/or advising students explaining how to connect students with assistance. It should contain clear and simple guide for students, faculty and staff concerning where to go for various issues. Get informed buy-in from all of those offices, with training where needed. Stabilize the Office of Academic Affairs, so that everyone knows who makes decisions about waivers, withdrawals and other issues that come up for students.
2. Expand the orientation process over the entire first year with possible follow up in the second year. It could begin with summer registration and proceed through early semester activities and continue during the first year with programs designed to connect students to each other and to the university. These should include academic as well as social events, possibly connected to FYE. The program should integrate academic and student life areas and introduce students to various campus services, academic expectations, student organizations, etc.
3. Increase communication between/among institutional sites/positions so that advocacy for students occurs across areas.
4. Have a student services leader in every college, similar to the advisors in the college of business and nursing. Every college would have a "pre-college" advisor that would work to help students apply to their intended major and have strong contacts with the enrollment management and student services offices and work as liaisons between the colleges and the greater University.
5. Develop written policies that are consistent between offices.

6. Require some contact with students who are withdrawing for a semester. How can we tell them their options when we don't even know they are leaving?
7. Administrative staff needs an avenue to share with faculty about the information that is needed and consequences of not having it in a timely manner. If this were available, collaboratively, we could probably come up with a way to do things without the problems we have now.

### **Issue II: A Holistic Approach to Advising**

*"We don't care what your plan is, but always have a plan."*

SCSU students need assistance in designing an academic path that takes them beyond their general education and major coursework to a clearer understanding of their life and/or career goals after college. Two challenges exist in this area.

First, many SCSU students are either undecided or change their majors at some point in their college career. This can result in a problem with motivation and aspiration because they eventually run into problems with registration. Some students think that there is something wrong with changing majors and need to be reassured that this is normal. The University must find a way to expose students to their options and give them a sense of what their choices are so they can make choices that match their true aspirations.

Second, there appears to be a disconnect between major and career advising. For example, liberal arts majors do not, in many cases, connect to careers, so they graduate and are unclear about what they should do after graduation. The University needs to help students think about career planning earlier by integrating academic and career advising into a seamless process for students.

#### ***Recommendations:***

1. Make the "major/career" discussion part of orientation, pre-major advising, department advising and career services.
2. Develop internship opportunities that allow students to explore career interests and get employment.
3. Provide release time to faculty for advising.
4. Decide who, aside from the advising center and COB undergraduate office, will do advising for undeclared students, and make sure those other advisors are trained and buy into the importance of advising. Faculty who advise should be offered incentives, but should also accept the responsibility of doing a thorough, professional job, as they do in teaching classes. Peer advising, if it is used at all, should be carefully monitored, and training should be thorough and ongoing. A faculty member should be responsible for the effectiveness and accuracy of peer advising centers.
5. Create career-oriented workshops that are held throughout the academic year. (Two to three a week). These workshops should focus on how to choose a major, how to choose a career, exploring business careers, exploring teaching careers, what can you do with an English major, a political science major, exploring health careers, becoming an accountant, etc. They could be brown bag lunch presentations, open to all undecided students.
6. Consider a 4-year advising and student development plan. What do first-year students need, what do 2<sup>nd</sup> year students need, what do 3<sup>rd</sup> year students need and what do fourth year students need. Of course we should think about the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students as well.

### **Issue III: An Engaged Student Population**

*"Intellectual development cannot happen in isolation."*

College students that have a sense of community and connection to their institution are more likely to persist and graduate. NSSE tells us that our students are not as engaged as students at peer institutions. SCSU has a breadth of student organizations and programming opportunities, but students do not take advantage of the offerings already provided. Being a part of a cohort increases the opportunity for engagement, but not all students are currently part of a formal cohort. How do we reach those students that are not part of a cohort and how do we encourage students to engage with the institution and each other? Four issues were identified that were barriers to a more engaged student population.

First, some students would rather work alone than in groups because group work is more difficult.

Second, the large size of the institution may be a barrier. Large class sizes are a necessity for financial reasons, but they can increase the feeling of isolation to the student.

Third, there is a lack of group space in the academic setting that would allow for students in the major to work together on coursework and other academic and non-academic activities.

Fourth, the faculty promotion and tenure process: 2 is the most important then 1 (3, 4, 5 don't matter).

#### ***Recommendations:***

1. Develop opportunities for developing connections within majors beyond classroom experience to enhance the students' sense of belonging.
2. Provide physical space in departments for majors for group processes/projects.
3. Invite students personally to an activity on campus.
4. Provide more resources to connect students not already part of an affinity group, such as a major, FYE program, Honors or athletics.
5. Design an activity so that students have at least one common experience.
6. Service learning and experiential learning could be opportunities for student engagement.
7. Expand First Year Experience Program to include all NEF's. The extended orientation can be connected to FYE, as can advising and career exploration. Expand the offerings in learning communities with interdisciplinary courses and programs for specific majors. Consider communities that are based on students' interests outside the classroom.
8. Add community service along with the social things that bring people together.
9. Require students to participate in some sort of out of class academic activities during their time here.
10. Require all new entering first year students to live on campus for their first two years. There would be exemptions for students who live within some radius who are also living with their parents or legal guardian.

#### **Issue IV: A Stronger University Community**

*"We need to have more connections as a university."*

An engaged student body must begin with an engaged faculty, staff and administration, but SCSU seems to lack that sense of community. It is felt there is a disconnect between faculty, staff, and students outside of the classroom and that the institution does not always model the values and ways of thinking and being that is expected of its students. Four challenges to building a stronger university community were identified:

First, faculty and staff do not always recognize the positives at SCSU and do not always have high aspirations for the institution.

Second, the university lacks a physical space for the type of employee interaction that would provide the opportunity for discussion with and learning from each other.

Third, time is a barrier. It takes resources and time to bring people together. People feel their jobs are already pressure filled, so there is a point at which faculty don't have time to gather and value the time spent together.

Fourth, the doom/gloom mood across the institution has led to a culture of isolation, despair and survival. Faculty and staff morale is an issue that the institution must address.

Fifth, email is a wonderful tool, but it has become our way of communicating. So many interactions are happening electronically that we've lost face to face communication.

Recommendations:

1. Engage new faculty and other faculty with campus activities, such as athletic, academic, social, and cultural events.
2. Offer a faculty/staff rate for events where fees are charged. This rate will be lower than the general public rate. The rate will be the student rate or slightly above the student rate.
3. Consider a New Faculty Orientation program that introduces faculty to various programs and services on campus. One aspect of this program should be an extended workshop on the nuts and bolts of student advising and the needs of students at different times in their academic careers.

#### **Issue V: A More Prepared Student Population**

*"Where do students learn the ways of the academy?"*

There is a gap between faculty expectations and students' knowledge of the academic culture of the institution. Many students do not know what is expected of them at the college level. Many of our students don't know how to make conceptual connections and have difficulty acquiring the kind of academic skills necessary to succeed in college. For example, 50% of SCSU's incoming freshman must take developmental math. This leads to situations where students feel intimidated and fearful. Whose responsibility is it to prepare these students for the academic challenges they will face? Two issues were identified:

First, there currently is no additional academic support for students in the 50-60 percentile of the high school graduating class, even though data shows these students are particularly at risk.

Second, accurate testing and placement of incoming students continues to be an issue.

***Recommendations:***

1. Provide a college transition course to outline what is expected of students academically and as a way to connect the entire incoming class.
2. Identify and advise students that need remedial help in mathematics, writing, reading, and study skills.
3. Develop a safety net for academically at-risk students. Students below the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of their high school class rank should be included.
4. Help faculty develop skills in teaching students how to be effective group participants.

5. Educate students on how to: 1. Take written notes; 2. Take notes on oral discussion in class beyond the PowerPoint slides; 3. Take notes on figures
6. Admit high ability students directly into their majors. This way SCSU maintain high admissions standards for our most talented students and admit the rest of the students into the proposed University College which would have more obtainable admissions standards.
7. Have a 4-year graduation guaranteed contracts if students can agree to certain criteria: 1) That they are ready to take required courses their first semester (most often Math); That they work no more than 15 hours a week; That they register for a minimum of 15 credits per semester.
8. Create a university-wide tutoring center where students can go to receive help, especially in the first year or two. This program should include an accredited tutor training program for any student involved in tutoring on campus.
9. Integrate faculty research (seriously) into teaching should be a priority, and may help with these sorts of problems. Getting students to be successful is not just a sort of campus based social service.
10. Revise the General Education program to make it more coherent. Attention to how it might fit with FYE and transfer issues should be important considerations. It should include the consideration of a required first year seminar.
11. Identify those courses for which the failure rate is significantly above the university average and develop a Supplemental Instructional program for those courses. We will need someone trained in Supplemental Instruction to oversee such a program.

#### **Issue VI: An Informed Decision-making Process and Commitment to Best Practices**

*"We need to have high aspirations for ourselves as an institution."*

The University has a number of positive efforts currently underway to improve student success. Many are occurring within specific cohort groups or within specific areas or departments. More public recognition of these successful efforts needs to occur so the campus can have a more informed discussion about things that we do right. This will bring a sense of the positive to campus. The University needs to encourage and support successful programs and apply those models across campus.

The major issue identified that could prevent this use of "best practices" on campus has to do with the lack of good data about our students. There is not a clear understanding of who the typical SCSU student is or who the specific student populations are and what their particular needs may be. The University has never measured what students bring in. We have assumptions about what they should bring, but we do not know where students are in their development when they arrive as first year students. The University also lacks good information about why specific programs and/or initiatives on campus are successful. We need to document why they are successful and use that evidence to make decisions.