

School of Public Affairs (SoPA)

Report on Strategic Planning and Five-Year Strategic Plan

MAY, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction.....	4
II.	Drafting a strategic plan.....	8
III.	SoPA’s strengths and challenges.....	10
IV.1	The SoPA stakeholder value proposition.....	14
IV.2	SoPA strategic themes.....	15
IV.3	SoPA strategic objectives.....	20
IV.4	SoPA strategic results.....	24
IV.5	SoPA external development priorities.....	26
IV.6	A global dimension to SoPA.....	26
IV.7	SoPA’s relationship to the MnSCU system.....	27
IV.8	SoPA strategic plan implementation.....	29
IV.9	Work plans selected for implementation.....	31
IV.10	Assurance of continuous improvement.....	35
IV.11	A closing thought: What is the role of departments in this plan?.....	35
	Appendix A: Programs in SoPA.....	37
	Appendix B: Report by Dr. Roby Robertson.....	39

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² At the invitation of the strategic planning group, Trustee Cirillo facilitated the afternoon session of the final strategic planning retreat, held on April 18, 2013. The strategic planning group was honored to have his assistance and expertise.

I. Introduction

A strategic plan for an organization describes the operational pathway for executing the organization's mission. The mission of SCSU's School of Public Affairs (SoPA) states:

Through active, experiential and global learning opportunities, we prepare our students to be stewards of the public interest and practitioners and leaders in the public and private sectors

In this report, we describe the history of SoPA's formation, the current structure of the school, and the history of SoPA's strategic planning work prior to the preparation of a strategic plan. Following that historical discussion is a step-by-step presentation of the components of the SoPA strategic plan.

I.1 *Forces behind the formation of SoPA*

On July 1, 2011, St. Cloud State University (SCSU) officially reorganized into two colleges and four professional schools. One of those professional schools is SoPA, which comprises four departments from the former College of Social Sciences – the Departments of Geography & Planning, Economics, Political Science, and Criminal Justice – and the Social Studies Teaching program.³

Why SoPA? When SCSU reorganized, it rewrote its mission and vision statements and created a new strategic framework for its academic programs. Below is a discussion of each of these changes at the institutional level:

1. The university's new mission statement says "We prepare our students for life, work and **citizenship** in the twenty-first century." (our boldface)

Note the "citizenship" piece to the mission, which emphasizes the importance of civic engagement as part of the student's on-campus and post-graduate experiences;

2. The university's new vision statement says "St. Cloud State University makes a positive, long-term impact on the lives of our students. We provide rigorous and relevant academic experiences with engaged, active learning opportunities in an intellectually vibrant, inclusive and diverse campus community. Our graduates are well-prepared to act as **responsible global citizens** and professionals who remain actively connected with our university." (our boldface)

Note that the "responsible global citizens" piece emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence, coupled with civic engagement;

3. The university established four "Learning Commitments" or "Pillars" for framing its academic programs, which are:

³ The Social Studies Teaching (SST) program trains students to teach Social Studies subjects in grades 5-12. In addition to completing SST courses and courses in the School of Education, students complete a chosen disciplinary emphasis (note that some of those disciplines are now housed in the College of Liberal Arts/School of the Arts).

- (i) **Community engagement** – students need role models and real-life in action examples of what they learn in the classroom;
- (ii) **Active learning** – the university must provide opportunities to students to put their classroom learning experiences into action so as to provide them with practical experience and reinforcement of their learning;
- (iii) **Sustainability** -- we must teach our students to manage both the community and physical environment as an investment in their future success;
- (iv) **Globalization** – the university must prepare students to graduate into an environment characterized by rapid change, quickly obsolescent knowledge, and an environment that emphasizes intercultural competence and understanding.

Around the same time the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system, under the leadership of its new Chancellor, Steven Rosenstone, updated its strategic framework, which is based on three commitments:

1. **Ensuring access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans**; MnSCU schools will prepare all its graduates to lead in every sector of Minnesota’s economy and make education accessible to all Minnesotans seeking a college, technical, or university education;
2. **Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota’s workforce and community needs**; MnSCU schools will be partners of choice for businesses and communities across the state in solving real-world problems and maintaining a highly-trained workforce. MnSCU faculty will help the state meet its need for a “substantially better educated workforce” by increasing the number of residents who graduate from certificate, diploma, or degree programs;
3. **Deliver to students, employers, communities and taxpayers the highest value/most affordable option**. MnSCU institutions strive to be economically accessible to all demographic groups, including those groups that are historically under-represented in higher education, as well as lower-income groups.

Each of these institutional and system changes were forces behind the formation of SoPA. ⁴ Public affairs is relevant to all four learning commitments, the new university mission and vision statements, and the new MnSCU Strategic Framework. A critical component of a student’s university education is that he/she acquires a “public affairs skill set” and “public affairs perspective” as a professional, citizen, taxpayer, parent, or volunteer. Being skilled in public affairs means being trained to:

- efficiently and effectively inform or influence public policy;
- apply policies, regulations, and laws to many different situations;
- teach, research, and inform the public about the causes and consequences of public policy; and
- work nimbly within the “public affairs network” (the vast social structure comprising individuals, organizations, and the complex relationships between them, that facilitate the creation, implementation, and informing of, public policy).

⁴ Other factors included the changing national landscape in U.S. higher education and greater demands from taxpayers, parents, and employers for universities to better align academic programming with employer needs and student demand.

Gaining a public affairs perspective means:

- strong civic engagement;
- appreciating the importance of participating in the policy formation process;
- having an understanding about how one's actions influence the rest of the community.

Helping students acquire a public affairs skill set and a public affairs perspective are part of the university's commitment to "... prepare our students for life, work and citizenship in the twenty-first century." SoPA's mission to "prepare our students to be stewards of the public interest" captures the essence of what a strong school of public affairs is supposed to do. Not all our graduates will end up going into public service or public affairs positions, but *all* students who come through SoPA, whether to take just one course, or to acquire one or several degrees, are assured a solid training in public affairs skills and many rich opportunities to develop a public affairs perspective.

Acquiring a public affairs skill set and public affairs perspective are clearly integral to each of the university's four Learning Commitments, particularly Community Engagement. Furthermore, a public affairs education is strongly aligned with the system's new Strategic Framework: (i) Leadership requires having a strong public affairs focus; (ii) A public affairs education must be accessible to all Minnesotans who seek a higher education; (iii) Partnering with businesses and communities is a core feature of what schools of public affairs can and should do; and (iv) the system should strive to provide a high quality education in public affairs to Minnesotans at a very affordable cost.

Universities need schools of public affairs because to be successful, all graduates must have sound skills in public affairs and have the ability to form balanced and thoughtful opinions on important policy issues. Because policy issues often cut across many disciplines, a school of public affairs must have an infrastructure that supports multi- and inter-disciplinary teaching and research, and encourages "programmatic autonomy". By programmatic autonomy, we mean that programs of study may flourish unconstrained by departmental boundaries. In other words, even though programs are housed in departments, the existence of a department should not hamper a program from meeting the needs of students. Faculty members in schools of public affairs must be active researchers on public affairs issues and engaged with the community on these issues. Following the philosophy underlying the Ernest Boyer/Teacher scholar model, high quality research and community engagement inform high-quality teaching. To use an analogy in Economics, teaching and research are "joint products" – good research begets good teaching and *vice versa*. Accordingly, SoPA was formed to meet the following "dual objective":

- To help students within and outside of Central Minnesota develop public affairs skill sets and public affairs perspectives; and
- Provide faculty and students opportunities to share knowledge and expertise with the community about public affairs issues.

Finally, fundamental to the system, institution, and SoPA is a strong commitment to student success.⁵ It is critical that a strategic plan for SoPA have as its most basic theme – a theme which underlies and provides purpose for all of the specific strategies in the plan -- *pathways for student success*. Because SCSU is a regional comprehensive university, SoPA's most important commitment must be to student success and our strategic plan must be student-centered and provide clear operational frames for strategic objectives that empower student-centered success.

1.2 Description of SoPA today

As of January, 2014, SoPA comprises over 50 full time faculty, approximately 1,500 students (1,350 undergraduates and 150 graduate students), 12 undergraduate programs, 6 graduate programs, 4 minor programs, and 5 other credentialing programs. These programs are listed in Appendix A. There are significant research assets in SoPA; In addition to a generally research-active faculty, SoPA's active research assets include the SCSU Survey, Center for Economic Education, and the *St. Cloud Area Quarterly Business Report*.⁶ On July 1, 2013, the school opened the *SoPA Research Institute (SoPARI)*, a central coordinating structure that houses these assets and which strives to facilitate high-quality faculty and student research on public affairs issues, especially research that is multi- or inter-disciplinary, grant-funded, and involving internal or external collaboration. Furthermore, a group of SoPA faculty are part of the Faculty Research Group on Immigrant Workers in Minnesota (FRGIWM), a multi- and inter-disciplinary research group with affiliated faculty rostered in SoPA and three other academic units.⁷

The School of Public Affairs is the only academic unit of its kind in the MnSCU system; Currently, we are *the* system's public policy school. Furthermore, SoPA is only one of two schools or colleges of public affairs, policy, or administration in the State of Minnesota (the other is the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis) and only one of a handful of such academic units in the Upper Midwest.⁸ There are just under 100 schools or colleges of public affairs, policy, or administration in the USA. Across these academic units, there is wide variation in how they are structured with respect to their portfolios of disciplines and programs, dominance of undergraduate relative to graduate programs, levels of engagement with the community, and other characteristics.

There is no single model of a public affairs school. Some schools of public affairs are almost exclusively devoted to preparing students for careers in public service, e.g. training of civil servants, while other schools have much broader approaches to career preparation. The School of Public Affairs is only one of several academic units of its kind in the nation that houses our particular combination of Social Science

⁵ By "student success" we mean positive performance across multiple indicators – GPA, graduation, placement, intellectual growth, involvement with student organizations, honors and awards, etc.

⁶ There are a number of other research assets that are either in planning or reorganization phases. These include the Minnesota Economic Development Center (revitalization phase), Justice Research Center (planning phase) and the Spatial Analysis Research Center (revitalization phase).

⁷ It should be noted that 5 SoPA faculty are part of the FRGIWM and the SoPA Dean is a co-founder of FRGIWM.

⁸ Other comparable academic units in the region include University of Nebraska-Omaha's College of Public Affairs & Community Service, University of Wisconsin-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs, and Grand Valley State University's (Michigan) College of Community and Public Service. Note that University of North Dakota has a College of Business and Public Administration and Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Public Policy includes a Department of Economics and has an Economist dean.

disciplines -- Economics, Political Science, Geography, and Criminal Justice.⁹ The predominant public affairs school/college model is focused on the political science discipline, with an often heavy emphasis on public administration. SoPA comprises not just the field of Political Science but three other strong, complementary social science disciplines. Our particular configuration of disciplines provides opportunities for enriching multi- and inter-disciplinary teaching and research. As with comparable academic units at other universities, SoPA is a “school” (as opposed to college) because our programs have a sharp professional focus that is adaptable to changing constraints.

SoPA departments and two SoPA staff members (the Student Relations Coordinator and Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator) occupy portions of the second and third floors of Stewart Hall¹⁰ and the third floor of the 51B building. The Dean’s office is located in Whitney House, with that space currently being used by the Dean, the SoPA Administrative Director, the Administrative Assistant to the Dean, and several work study students. Most SoPA classes are taught in Stewart Hall and the 51B Building. The SoPA Research Institute is located on the third floor of Stewart Hall, in the same suite as the two SoPA coordinators

II. Drafting a strategic plan

In order for a strategic plan to be written, a foundation for the strategic planning process had to be laid. Strategic plans aren’t just written, but are the outcomes of activities and conversations that take place long before any plan is drafted. This section describes the history of those activities and conversations.

II.1 The history of the mission statement

Approximately one month after SCSU’s new organizational structure took effect, the SoPA Interim Dean organized a full-day retreat in downtown St. Cloud for a group of persons comprising internal stakeholders (some SoPA faculty and students and several faculty and staff from SCSU units outside SoPA) and external stakeholders (some SoPA alumni, local employers and government leaders). The retreat was facilitated by Dr. Roby Robertson, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institute of Government at University of Arkansas-Little Rock. Dr. Robertson’s report, which summarizes the outcome of that retreat, is provided in Appendix B. Dr. Robertson helped the group draft preliminary mission and vision statements, identify strengths and challenges facing the brand new school, and start the process that would eventually lead to a draft plan. The retreat can best be described as part “mission/vision conversation” and part precursor to a strategic planning exercise.

Dr. Robertson set aside time during the day for different sub-groups to write different draft mission statements. Afterwards, the entire group convened to hear the various draft mission statements and write a composite mission statement. An edited and polished version of the composite statement was presented to the school at an afternoon retreat during the opening of the 2011/12 academic year, as part of Convocation Week activities. This retreat included the entire SoPA faculty and staff and a group

⁹ The SST program is a natural fit for SoPA because of its commitment to train teachers to help young people appreciate the importance of civic engagement and active participation in public affairs.

¹⁰ SoPA has a dedicated faculty and staff lounge on the first floor of Stewart Hall.

of invited external stakeholders. Titled the “SoPA Getting Started Workshop,” the Interim Dean presented the draft mission statement to attendees. Faculty were asked to provide feedback on the draft mission statement and the Interim Dean discussed the statement with the Provost throughout Fall Semester, 2011. Eventually, the draft statement was sent to the University’s Strategic Planning Committee for review, which recommended in January, 2012, that it be approved by the President. The President approved the statement during Spring Semester, 2012.

The process that led to the crystallization of the school’s official mission statement provides an excellent example of a process at work where the “means” are sometimes more valuable than the “ends.” The school- and university-wide conversations about the school’s purpose, which included contributions by valuable external stakeholders, helped prepare the school for the 5 full-day strategic planning retreats during AY 2012/13 and the writing of this strategic plan. The mission has sufficiently “percolated” through the school over the last two years that the school is now prepared to implement the plan.

II.2 *The history of the Vision Statement*

While our mission statement describes why we exist, our vision statement lays out what makes us distinct and what we are striving to achieve, i.e. SoPA as it would appear in a future successful state. A draft vision statement was written during the retreat facilitated by Dr. Robertson and then discussed further during the all-afternoon retreat mentioned above. The Interim Dean gave a presentation on his vision for the school, followed by a panel of internal and external stakeholders who offered their views on a vision for SoPA in the future. The vision statement was modified following that retreat, then it was reviewed by the University’s Strategic Planning Committee, who recommended its approval to the President. During Spring Semester, 2012, the President approved the statement below:

SoPA Vision Statement

We provide the highest quality and most comprehensive undergraduate and graduate public affairs education in the upper Midwest by engaging our students and faculty in the study and critical analysis of public policy and by serving as a rich source of knowledge for our stakeholders, both local and global.

The school’s vision statement aligns very nicely with the university’s new vision statement, presented earlier. Note in particular two pieces in the university’s vision statement: (i) “We provide rigorous and relevant academic experiences with engaged, active learning opportunities...” and (ii) “Our graduates are well-prepared to act as responsible global citizens and professionals who remain actively connected with our university.” The first half of SoPA’s vision statement speaks to the “rigorous and relevant” reference and the second half of the vision statement speaks to the importance of our graduates having a global perspective and a strong priority to community engagement.

The school’s vision statement also emphasizes a very important feature of strong public affairs schools, something to which SoPA aspires: To serve as a “window” between the university and community. In studying best practices at top schools and colleges of public affairs, we observed that at those institutions, when the community engages with the university, it often comes first to the school of public affairs, and when the university wishes to engage with the community, it comes first to the school

of public affairs. Both our mission and vision statements speak to the importance of SoPA serving as an important “window” between the university and community.

II.3 The work of the SoPA Strategic Planning Task Force during AY 2012/13

In September, 2012, the Interim Dean formed the SoPA Strategic Planning Task Force, comprising eight SoPA faculty members (two from each department), the three staff members in the dean’s office (Student Relations Coordinator, Experiential Learning and Outreach Coordinator, and the Administrative Director). The task force met six times.¹¹ Under the facilitation of Associate VP/Associate Provost Lisa Foss, the retreats have taken the task force through a series of stages of production that have culminated in the writing of this strategic plan document.

The retreats through December 7, 2012 resulted in the identification of stakeholder core values and five key strategic planning themes. At the retreat held on February 28, 2013, the task force allocated the day to a “strategic mapping exercise” where the group linked each theme to actionable strategies. Following that retreat, the Interim Dean collaborated with Associate Provost/AVP Foss to write the first draft of the strategic plan. The morning session of the April 18, 2013, retreat was used to discuss the first draft of the strategic plan. The afternoon session, facilitated by MnSCU Trustee Alexander Cirillo, Jr., consisted of a discussion centered on two interrelated SOPA strategic planning themes – “innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship,” and “promoting internal and external collaboration.”

III. SoPA’s strengths and challenges

This strategic plan was written so the school could best capitalize on its strengths and take advantage of a number of opportunities that currently exist. Our new school faces challenges, however, and ways to overcome these challenges must be addressed.

Very early in the school’s life, two major long term projects were identified for planning and implementation -- a school-wide Master of Public Administration (MPA) program and the SoPA Research Institute. The MPA project will require a substantial amount of resources and commitment by both central administration and the school, hence the school’s strategic plan must include plans for the MPA project. The SoPA Research Institute is a central coordinating structure in the school, as it puts the school’s research assets under one administrative roof,¹² provides opportunities for the school to leverage complementarities between these assets, and facilitate and enhance opportunities for SoPA students to collaborate on research projects with faculty, external stakeholders of all varieties, and other students. There are likely to be significant complementarities between the Research Institute and

¹¹ These meetings included a two-day retreat on November 2/3, 2012, a full-day retreat on December 7, 2012, a part-day luncheon meeting on February 8, 2013, full-day retreats on February 28, 2013 and April 18, 2013, and a final full-afternoon meeting on May 2, 2013.

¹² The Research Institute (SoPARI) is directed by a SoPA faculty member with 0.75 FTE of course release. Administrative support is currently provided by the Dean’s office and monetary and in-kind financial support are currently provided by the Dean’s Office and Research & Sponsored programs. As of January, 2014, SoPARI had generated nearly \$100,000 in external funding.

the MPA. The strategic plan must include plans for the Research Institute and recognize the complementarities between the Research Institute and the MPA.

III.1 *Key strengths and challenges facing the school*

To help motivate the strategic plan further, the following key opportunities, strengths, and challenges facing the school were identified. Some key strengths include the following:

- Long before the reorganization, then-College of Social Sciences, and now-SoPA, faculty recognized the importance of helping students acquire a public affairs skill set and a public affairs perspective. Some courses and programs in COSS, now housed in SoPA, were designed to help students gain a global understanding and teach them about civic engagement and public policy. Prior to coming together under the new organizational structure, the departments and faculty who make up the new school already shared a strong commitment to global understanding and civic engagement.¹³ These commitments must permeate the plan and provide definition to the school and its unique approach to “public affairs.” A clear public policy focus already exists within all programs in the school. As the school and its programs evolve, public policy, global competence and civic engagement will become cornerstones of the School of Public Affairs experience and will create the common framework from which students will develop knowledge and experiences through coursework and experiential learning opportunities.
- While the School of Public Affairs is a relatively new organizational unit, the departments and programs in the school came from a common unit, have a common history, and a history of collaboration and collegiality that can only be strengthened by the environment created by the new school structure.
- Each department has strong, unique programs with an existing “brand recognition.” This will give the School a solid foundation from which to build a reputation and identity and from which we can launch new academic programs and research initiatives.
- The School’s common history provides a stepping-off point to encourage the expansion of programmatic and research collaborations across the School, SCSU, and its existing and potential local and global community partners.
- All departments in the school have strong histories of community engagement and outreach.

Key challenges identified by the strategic planning task force include the following:

- SOPA’s “newness” as an organizational unit means that it has yet to develop a clear shared identity among its faculty, staff and students and a reputation among the external community. Even though the School shares a common organizational history, it must address a “siloe” culture that previously existed. SoPA’s predecessor home, the College of Social Sciences (COSS),

¹³ For example, an underlying theme of much of the Political Science curriculum is civic engagement. One important piece to the Social Studies Teaching program is that it trains students to teach civic engagement in public schools.

generally lacked an operational structure that encouraged multi- and inter-disciplinary teaching and research. The siloed department culture inherent to COSS, endemic to other units on campus prior to reorganization, generally discouraged programmatic autonomy by tending to align programmatic/disciplinary boundaries with departmental boundaries. The strategic plan will need to identify steps to increase engagement across the School and to enhance communication across and among departments to support shared responsibility across the School for our future success. Our strategic plan must provide a pathway for an operational structure for SoPA that supports multi- and inter-disciplinary work and encourages programmatic autonomy.

- Whenever a new academic unit is formed, there is the challenge of establishing a brand and identity. Historically, schools of public affairs are rooted intellectually in the Political Science field and strongly aligned with the needs of the public service labor market. Were SoPA mostly focused on training students for careers in public service and the curriculum was very much dominated by Political Science (specifically Public Administration), our brand and identity would be relatively easy to craft and communicate (we would essentially be replicating what many public affairs schools do). However, SoPA has a unique combination of disciplines and a more expansive mission and vision than most other schools of public affairs. This creates a greater challenge in forming an internal identity and communicating our brand outside of SoPA.
- SoPA exists within a higher education context in which public support and resources are diminishing, expectations from students and other stakeholders are increasing, and high school graduating classes are getting smaller. It is clear that the growth and success of SoPA will be reliant on a model that allocates resources toward our most important programs and priorities and develops new resources to support new initiatives. The SoPA strategic plan must include steps for increasing and enhancing student enrollment among existing programs and designing new programs to meet student and workforce demands, as well as expanding opportunities for other types of funding support, including grant and contract funding, and private donor support. Furthermore, the plan must address the importance of obtaining input from the market (i.e. employers) in helping to shape programs.
- There is no common space for SoPA personnel and students. SoPA departments, staff offices, the dean's office, classrooms and labs are scattered around a portion of the campus, an arrangement generally not very conducive to a collaborative and collegial environment.
- There has never been any sort of enrollment plan for SoPA departments and programs. The predecessor home for these departments and programs, the College of Social Sciences, never purposefully engaged in enrollment planning as a unit-wide exercise. Thus, there is no clear sense in the school about what optimal program enrollments, as well as targets, should be achieved, nor is there an empirical understanding as to how enrollments in SoPA are influenced by enrollments in other schools and colleges and *vice versa*.
- Some programs in SoPA are outliers, e.g. Travel and Tourism (which could easily be in a business school or in a separate school of hospitality and tourism (as is found at some universities)), and Land Surveying (which is often found in engineering schools). The strategic plan needs to be inclusive of such programs.

Based on this inventory of key strengths and challenges, as well as ongoing large-scale initiatives taking place in the school already, we see the most critical needs that the SoPA strategic plan should address to be the following:

- Collaboration and communication within the school, as well as with other units on campus
- Establishing efficient and effective pathways for public affairs students to be successful, both in school and post-graduation
- Providing a pathway for an operational structure for SoPA that supports inter-disciplinary work and encourages programmatic autonomy
- A recruiting strategy for students in general, and more specifically, students of color, worker learners, and transfer students (a growing source of new students for the university)
- An enrollment plan for the school which: (1) involves the school gaining some control over the admissions process; (2) is based on optimal program sizes and takes account of complementarity in enrollments between SoPA and other academic units; and (3) enhances enrollment among existing programs
- Designing new programs and courses shared with other schools and colleges, with a public affairs orientation, to meet student and workforce demand
- Promoting innovation in teaching of public affairs, including the use of “high impact practices” and web-based instruction
- A clear commitment to program identity and strength
- Increasing opportunities for external development, including development that will support a common space
- Ensuring sufficient resources are available to support a vibrant school-wide graduate program and the SoPA Research Institute
- Leveraging the SoPA Research Institute to facilitate collaborative research that helps educate students, enhance faculty development, and help the community
- A strong commitment to global engagement in the school’s programming

Components of the strategic plan

The SoPA strategic plan contains these following components, which are discussed in detail below:

1. The SoPA Stakeholder Value Proposition
2. SoPA strategic themes
3. SoPA strategic objectives
4. SoPA strategic results
5. Timeline of implementation

IV.1 The SoPA Stakeholder Value Proposition

It is critical that the programs and services provided by SoPA are designed to not only meet, but exceed, the needs and expectations of a diverse set of stakeholders, most importantly our students. Our stakeholders' perspectives will drive our program development work and our stakeholder engagement and communication efforts, and will frame how we measure our success. Furthermore, the task force fully understands and appreciates that the SoPA stakeholder value proposition is the school's "brand" and is thus the legacy we want to leave with our stakeholders, most importantly, again, our students.

During one of the early retreats, the task force identified sets of core values it believes are crucial for each of three stakeholder groups – students, faculty, and external stakeholders (alumni, community partners, employers, and donors). Below are those core values followed by discussion.

Students:

The task force believes that students will value SoPA highly if: (a) SoPA faculty and staff are **student-centered, welcoming, and current in methods**; (b) Students have frequent opportunities to **engage with faculty** throughout their academic experiences and find faculty to be **inspirational, knowledgeable, approachable and accessible**; (c) SoPA faculty and staff serve as **mentors** who provide **high-quality academic experiences** that support student **professional growth** and development; (d) the school provides enriching **community engagement** opportunities; (e) SoPA programming helps students form a **global perspective**; and (f) SoPA programs enhance skills in how and to maneuver through the complex public affairs **network**.

Some of the terms in boldface above need clarification:

- **"Student-centered"** means that students are the school's stakeholder group that takes highest priority. The school exists ultimately to serve the needs of our students and the work we do to train our students produces significant byproducts, e.g. research and community engagement that benefit the faculty professionally. In turn, the benefits enjoyed by the faculty from doing research and engaging the community help inform high-quality teaching, which in turn benefit our students;
- **"High-quality academic experiences"** means that a student not only masters public affairs content, but gains a strong public affairs perspective. These experiences will change his/her view of the World and provide a strong sense of professional purpose;
- As MnSCU Trustee Cirillo emphasized during the final retreat, a **"mentor"** is someone with whom you have a relationship in education, who takes you to a place you could not have gone to alone, the outcome of which surprises both of you. A strong commitment to mentoring upcoming public affairs professionals is extremely important for a public affairs school.
- The term **"global"** contrasts with the word "international." In a public affairs context, the two terms are not interchangeable. The distinction is best thought of in terms of organizations. An international organization conducts operations and is located in different countries, with the structure of its operations differing by international boundaries. A global organization is one

that has the ability to spread and replicate itself all over the World. A global organization has a common culture, value set and mode of operation that ties all units of the organization together into one entity. There is harmony between different units of the organization despite cross-border differences in local cultures and values. SoPA students will value SoPA because an educational experience in the school helps facilitate an appreciation and understanding of what it means to think “globally”;

- The reference to **networks** above reflects another important attribute of a public affairs skill set. Students trained in SoPA will enter the public policy network (discussed earlier). Being successful in the public affairs arena requires one to master an understanding of this network and how to operate efficiently and effectively within it.

Faculty:

The task force believes that faculty within and outside of SoPA will value the school highly if SoPA faculty: (a) feel empowered to facilitate student-centered success (b) are **collegial, collaborative**¹⁴ and respectful of all points of view in teaching, research and service; (c) are strongly committed to training students to be **stewards of the public interest**; (d) are active in their respective disciplines but also **eager to engage** in interdisciplinary work that is **mutually productive** for all involved; and (e) deliver programming that emphasizes a **public affairs focus** and the importance of **community engagement**.

Alumni, community partners, employers and donors:

The task force believes that SoPA’s alumni, community partners, employers and donors will value the school highly if: (a) SoPA produces graduates who are **highly skilled** and prepared to be **leaders** in their professions and communities; (b) SoPA faculty are **innovative, knowledgeable, respectful, responsive, and approachable**; (c) SoPA’s community efforts **align** well with the university’s community efforts; and (d) we continually engage our external stakeholders by soliciting their input in the shaping of our programs

IV.2 SoPA Strategic Themes

The strategic planning task force identified four Strategic Themes which provide the framework for our combined work as a school. They represent our major focus and broadly define how we will operationalize our mission and vision. These strategic themes are designed to focus and guide our programs, refine development of services that enhance student success, help empower our faculty to facilitate student success, help our faculty stay engaged, well-trained, and well-positioned, inform our efforts to improve our programmatic offerings, and inform resource deployment decisions around those activities that are most critical to our future success.

¹⁴ By “collaborative,” we mean a group of colleagues from different parts of the school voluntarily getting together to work on projects of common interest and enjoying the process.

In developing the strategic themes for SoPA, it became clear that four overarching concepts were central to the future of the School. First, establishing pathways for student success needs to be a theme throughout the strategic plan. Second, a clear commitment to program identity and strength is essential. Third, the need for a focus on globalization throughout the curricula, programs, and research activities of faculty and students, will be a critical component of a public affairs education in the 21st century. Fourth, the plan must address the need for “unity in diversity,” which means our programs and curricula will be strengthened because of the diverse methods, conceptual frameworks, and history of the disciplines represented in the school. As we develop SoPA’s identity further, our intellectual diversity must not create silos between our departments and academic programs, but instead serve to enrich them as we create a robust, interdisciplinary educational experience for our students and research environment for our faculty.

In any strategic plan, there is likely to be overlap of strategic themes. The SoPA strategic plan is very much characterized by such overlap. One reason for overlap in this particular plan is that at the institutional level, a broad theme is: Pathways for student success. The task force strongly believes that that institutional theme should underlie and provide purpose for all of the strategies in the SoPA strategic plan.

The four strategic themes are the following:

Strategic Theme 1: Empowering student-centered success

This is the most fundamental theme, as it aligns with the institutional theme of pathways for student success. There are several things the school must do to be successful in delivering on this theme:

1. If we are to be student-focused, we need to be much more proactive in recruiting, we must gain some control over the admissions process, and there must be sensible enrollment planning:
 - (a) With respect to recruiting, we must reach out to important student populations, including Senior to Sophomore students, Post-Secondary Educational Opportunity (PSEO) students, other students with whom we come in contact in high schools, transfer students, and working professionals. With these populations, we must work on a message for describing our programs, articulating careers, discussing earnings potential, etc. We want students to understand, even before they apply to university, the importance of a public affairs education and to consider a career in public affairs;
 - (b) With respect to admissions, if students are going to be a primary focus for SoPA and a primary measure of our success, we should choose them at the outset through hands on consideration of incoming students who might be interested in the programs we offer. Consideration should be given to creating a minimum GPA for the school, for example;
 - (c) With respect to enrollment planning, the current approach is to allow programs to grow simply based on manifested student interest; The sizes of our programs and the composition of our student pool have in the past changed in response to the numbers and types of students who happen to elect our majors. In contrast, the school needs to develop

- a plan not only for the size, but also the composition (percentage recruited from high schools, percentage that are transfers, percentage that are working professionals, for example), of the student pool. Questions such as: What is the optimal number of students and what is the optimal composition of students in program X -- must be addressed
2. Third we must be more intentional about advising. When students get to SCSU, we must help facilitate their choice of a SoPA program and monitor their development through graduation and beyond. Consideration should be given to requiring students to take a common introductory course and to attend a yearly advising session, for example.

Strategic Theme 2: Innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship

A characteristic of a strong public affairs school or college is that its curricula and portfolio of student and faculty scholarship activities are multi- and inter-disciplinary. With respect to curriculum, while SoPA will always have traditional disciplinary programs, interdisciplinary programs are important because: (1) of our commitments to help students acquire public affairs skills and ways of thinking; and (2) the analysis of public policy issues usually requires input from a wide variety of disciplines. The MPA project, a school-wide undergraduate program in public affairs, as well as a school-wide Honors program, are clear examples.

There should be common courses, under a SoPA rubric, that all SoPA majors would take. These courses must go beyond “show and tell” courses where faculty from each SoPA department simply contribute information about their discipline in the context of some topic. Instead, a truly integrated curriculum must include dedicated SoPA courses taught in cross-disciplinary ways to create a “public affairs way of thinking.” We envision a SoPA honors program that draws on all our programs’ strengths, and we envision innovative team-taught courses on public affairs issues.

With respect to scholarship, SoPA will always have faculty who work on discipline-specific kinds of policy issues. However, a distinguishing feature of strong public affairs units is that faculty, as well as students, from different disciplines collaborate to analyze important public affairs issues. That is one of the objectives behind the formation of the SoPA Research Institute. In the spirit of the Boyer teacher/scholar model, curriculum drives scholarship and *vice versa*. We contend that strong public affairs scholarship by both students and faculty will require an innovative and integrated curriculum and that interdisciplinary scholarship based on public affairs issues will help shape a leading-edge public affairs curriculum.

Strategic Theme 3: School-wide human resource excellence and adaptability

A strong school of public affairs requires the hiring and support of strong faculty. This means that we must hire “the best and the brightest,” including faculty with multi- and inter-disciplinary perspectives and with teaching and research interests in public affairs issues. In addition, incumbent faculty need to be supported, incentivized and rewarded properly. Within the context of the Master Agreement, we

must seize opportunities to reward our faculty for meritorious performance, extra-load¹⁵ work such as graduate thesis supervision, provide incentives for faculty (and staff) to be innovative and resourceful in their work, and encourage talented faculty and staff to apply for positions in SoPA. Guidelines for tenure and promotion should take account of different types of scholarship, e.g. peer-reviewed publications versus externally validated research reports for public agencies, governments, or accreditation commissions, which vary by discipline and faculty skills.

Furthermore, we believe that *adaptability* is going to be one of the most important attributes of employees in the 21st century. A very important question for our organization is: How can SoPA overcome the institutional constraints that make our curricular and human resources often so unadaptable?

Strategic Theme 4: Promoting internal and external collaboration

It is important to define some terms here. First, by “collaboration” we mean working relationships between SoPA and its stakeholders. “Internal” means internal to the MnSCU system, hence internal stakeholders are not just SoPA students, faculty, and staff, but all groups within the system. “External” means external to the system, which would include alumni, employers, donors, and other individuals and organizations that are not part of the MnSCU system.

That said, a key to a strong school of public affairs is internal teamwork on public affairs issues, whether it is faculty/faculty, faculty/student, or student/student teamwork on teaching or research projects related to public affairs issues. In the teaching area, we want faculty, both within and outside of SoPA, to collaborate on the development of innovative and integrated curricula and team up, e.g. through co-teaching by faculty across departments, schools/colleges, and system institutions, to deliver content. External stakeholders who are often intimately involved with the public affairs issues and problems we teach about can also be tapped to help develop curriculum. In the area of scholarship, we want the school to be research-active with faculty members not just working on research projects within their own disciplines, but also on collaborative research projects centered on public affairs issues. We also want faculty scholarship to generate meaningful collaborative research opportunities for students. Another key is creative and proactive community engagement work, whether it be provision of expertise and advice to community partners, collaboration on solving important public affairs issues of the day, or working with community partners to facilitate meaningful experiential learning projects for students.

Exploring linkages between SoPA’s strategic themes

As noted above, it is common in a strategic planning exercise for emerging strategic themes to be interrelated. For the case of SoPA, it is easy to argue that actions taken to fulfill an objective(s) aligned with strategic theme 1 will influence the benefits enjoyed from pursuing actions taken to fulfill an objective(s) aligned with strategic theme 2. This is especially the case for strategic themes 2 and 4;

¹⁵ By extra-load we mean work that is not part of assigned workload, whether it be normal load (within the standard full time work assignment of 24 credits per academic year) or over-load. For example, historically most faculty on campus have supervised graduate capstone projects outside of load and have received no compensation.

Greater levels of internal collaboration, e.g. cross-departmental collaboration of SoPA faculty, are likely to result in a more innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship, and *vice versa*.

At its last retreat, the task force chose to set aside a full afternoon to discuss this important connection between themes 2 and 4. Trustee Cirillo, who has expertise in facilitating collaboration and team-building, was asked by the task force to facilitate a discussion focusing on how SoPA faculty could collaborate to achieve more innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship. Note that by “innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship” we mean a multi- and inter-disciplinary curriculum and research with a public affairs focus.

The facilitated conversation produced the following important points;

1. Any team committed to innovation should include four kinds of people – **architects**, **scouts**, **specialists**, and **adapters**. An architect is deep in his/her field, but knows how to approach that depth and apply it to other fields. For example, an architect in higher education will have a vision for his/her academic organization. A specialist advances specific areas and does not focus on broad applicability. For example, a specialist in the field of higher education would look for depth of knowledge around curriculum. A scout looks for new connections between existing solutions, taking knowledge from different sources in the organization and speculating on its applications. In higher education, for example, a scout would take knowledge from other institutions and disciplines and share it with his/her colleagues so that they can help transform student experiences. An adapter doesn't generate an initial idea, but takes the knowledge and inventions of others and looks for ways to bring them to the World. In higher education, an adapter would, for example, look for connections between technology and content delivery in higher education, leading to online content delivery solutions. Trustee Cirillo emphasized that a team comprising all four types would be best positioned to generate innovative solutions;
2. Much of the time, the word “innovation” is used inappropriately. Innovation is supposed to be *transformational* and always occurs in stages, beginning with the “spark” and ending in “execution.” Trustee Cirillo cited the Apple Ipad, the 3M “Post-it” note, and insulin as examples of innovations that were truly transformational. The Ipad transformed how we speak and write; The Post-it transformed how people communicate, and insulin transformed the process by which diabetics manage their disease. For SoPA, an innovative, integrated curriculum transforms the student's experience through an enriching public affairs education;
3. SoPA's team includes all four types discussed above. The people who can take knowledge and leverage it into a transformative experience for students are being truly innovative. The most innovative persons cross disciplines, hence the importance of a multi- and inter-disciplinary curriculum; If one can make the link from one discipline to the other, that's where the “spark” originates. Yet, the people responsible for the execution are as important in the process of innovation as those responsible for the spark;
4. Collaboration makes the problem-solving process more efficient and effective. While creating an innovative, integrated curriculum can be done “unilaterally” (by one person or within one discipline), a collaboration between the four types and involving all of our programs is likely to

lead to a richer solution. In other words, a unilateral approach will very likely cause us to miss out on benefits of the group's collective wisdom;

5. Each member of SoPA will have a different capacity for collaboration and action strategies involving collaboration must take account of this;
6. The ability to innovate depends partly on one's degree of imagination, which in turn depends upon one's intellectual capacity and the size of one's network. Furthermore, the ability to innovate depends upon how one frames problems, identifies solutions, and how one executes.

Trustee Cirillo encouraged the task force, in the context of strategic themes 2 and 4, to think about examples of truly transformational experiences for students, faculty, and the school. One example would be if SoPA achieved fame for successfully negotiating peace in the Middle East. Such an accomplishment would transform both the school and university by bringing in financial resources, prestige, and outstanding faculty and students. This achievement would also transform local government, community, and the state. This example inspired a collective realization in the task force: To provide a transformative experience in SoPA, we need to focus on the mechanism of content delivery and partnerships with external organizations.

Trustee Cirillo's overarching message is the following. The mindset we should have for SoPA's curriculum is: How do SoPA's programs transform students, faculty, the school, and the World? We want our students to come out of SoPA with a wider and richer view of how the World works. We want to ensure that they have an experience that is transformative – something must happen in the school that changes their lives. It was suggested that the SOPA graduates we'd be most proud of are those who recognize that what we gave them was something really meaningful. The task force was encouraged to compare the school to a completely different institution such as St. Olaf College, which is known as a special institution that does special things for its students, e.g. many St. Olaf graduates go into the Peace Corps.

Finally, Trustee Cirillo encouraged the task force to think about strategic themes 2 and 4, specifically with respect to the use of adjunct faculty, the delivery of online education, and in the process of mentoring. Adjuncts are a very solid bridge back to the community and, if selected properly, can often be used effectively to implement pilot programs or experiments around classes. Online delivery is important because it allows SoPA to explore pedagogical avenues not available through traditional delivery and tap into other markets for public affairs students. Finally, mentoring is important because it engenders professional friendships and a strong, rich school culture.

IV.3 SoPA Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives are more tactical activities that must be completed to achieve Strategic Themes. The Strategic Themes articulated earlier are not stand alone efforts but are inter-connected and reinforcing. As a result, the 17 strategic objectives described on the following pages will support the achievement of multiple themes within this strategic plan and support the achievement of Strategic Results identified earlier. Within each Strategic Objective, examples of specific initiatives and activities are identified (these are not meant to be exhaustive lists) that will serve as the basis for a SoPA work plan for the next half-decade.

Strategic Theme 1: Empowering student-centered success

A. Expand efforts to recruit students.

- Create greater scholarship, endowment, and assistantship opportunities for SoPA students
- Strengthen ties with high schools; Develop strategies for recruiting and retaining Senior to Sophomore and PSEO students, e.g. enlist existing SoPA majors to visit their former high schools as “SoPA ambassadors”, have the Social Studies Teaching (SST) program work with high school teachers to help recruit students
- Build relationships between SoPA faculty and transfer school faculty
- Find ways to ease transferability of courses into SoPA from two-year partners
- Develop recruitment strategies for each of the markets SoPA serves – transfer students, new entering freshmen (NEF), worker learners, students of color, and international students
- Work with Dean of University College/Associate Provost for Student Success and his/her staff in building bridge programs with the school’s and university’s most important two-year partners
- Create guides for transfer students
- Engage in sensible enrollment planning based on optimal program sizes and carefully account for inter-relationships between enrollments in SoPA and other units
- Develop a recruiting strategy that enhances diversity in the SoPA student pool and contributes to a school climate that is welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant
- Strengthen implementation of existing articulation agreements and develop new articulation agreements with 2-year partner schools
- Develop electronic/web communication pieces for guidance counselors and recruiters
- Showcase highly successful current SoPA students to incoming SoPA students
- Develop a portion of the school’s webpage featuring SoPA graduates who have done exceptionally well
- Engage with parents and other stakeholders who have close relationships with prospective students
- Build long term and strong relationships between SoPA and overseas universities.

B. Provide a clear path for student success

- Provide a one-stop shop for advising students
- In collaboration with student support service units, develop training programs for SoPA advisors to ensure an integrated student experience
- Strengthen connection with University College
- Increase engagement with Career Services, e.g. enhance SoPA Career Day

C. Enhance student engagement within SoPA

- Develop a one hour weekly seminar (one credit) that every SoPA major must take beginning the semester he/she is in the major
- Emphasize student "connection" opportunities with faculty and each other (socials, SoPA game day, web site, newsletter)
- Identify a common space for SoPA students
- Develop a model of a dynamic mentoring relationship between faculty and students
- Expand networking opportunities between students, alumni, and employers

Strategic Theme 2: Innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship

A. Develop a public affairs focus and competency in all SoPA grads

- Create competencies that all SoPA students must master before graduation
- Expand use of “high impact practices” in SoPA, specifically undergraduate research, service learning & community-based learning, internship and other capstone experience projects, and diversity and global learning
- Ensure all SoPA students develop an appreciation of global issues
- Require all SoPA students to have a SoPA course in research methods and statistics
- Create a SoPA Honors program (aligned with the university’s Honors program)
- Expose students to multicultural disciplines/perspectives
- Create a capstone experience for all SoPA majors (could be common or offered in individual disciplines)
- Facilitate a leadership role for the SoPA Curriculum Committee
- Develop a new school-wide course that’s in one of the Liberal Education Program (LEP) goal areas
- Develop plans for a program in public affairs that is compatible with transfer students
- Integrate civic engagement/experiential learning into the SoPA student experience such that each SoPA program facilitates applied learning through:
 - Completion of internship
 - Identification of a service learning course
 - Simulated experiences such as the Model UN
 - Integration of *American Democracy Project* (ADP) activities and connection of ADP work with the university’s four learning commitments

B. Align SoPA curricula with community and workforce needs

- Facilitate regular interactions between SoPA faculty and regional employers
- Build connections with, and nurture cultivation of resources from, the community
- Enhance the integration of experiential learning into school curricula
- Implement the MPA program expeditiously

C. Create a school-level infrastructure to support curricular innovation and integration

- Develop school-wide courses that focus on policy
- Identify a comfortable common space for SoPA faculty and staff to work in
- Develop a process for school-level schedule planning, e.g. develop a mechanism for communicating department and program course schedules within the school
- Rethink process/role of school level curriculum committee, e.g. allocate reassigned time to members of the school-level curriculum committee
- Have in place a strong assessment structure for the School and its programs.

D. Foster a culture of innovation and integration within the SoPA curriculum

- Create school-wide incubator grants for innovative course models or new curriculum development
- Develop information sharing mechanism/approach to encourage innovative development
- Develop ongoing professional development programs related to innovative curriculum

E. Continue implementation of School of Public Affairs Research Institute (SoPARI)

- Continue to identify software, hardware, staff, money and space to support SoPARI
- Have SoPARI facilitate the creation of a SoPA prefix “Statistics for Public Affairs” course and a “Policy Analysis” course
- Explore ways in which SoPARI can contribute to assessment in that part of the curriculum related to research skills and methods
- Develop a clear long term research agenda for SoPARI
- Continue to develop an administrative structure for SoPARI
- Develop a web site and promotional activities for marketing SoPARI’s work
- Develop an external development strategy for SoPARI

Strategic Theme 3: School-wide human resource excellence and adaptability

A. Create an approach to faculty and staff recruitment and retention to achieve school wide objectives

- Develop a strategy to recruit talented public affairs-focused faculty
- Identify and support ongoing professional development opportunities for school personnel
- Develop a strategy that encourages diversity in faculty and staff hiring, with respect to ethnicity, divergence of ideas, cultural anchors, and pedagogies
- Integrate ongoing Article 20 (IFO Master Agreement) work on changing roles and expectations of faculty into SoPA; Use this work to further clarify roles and expectations of faculty

B. Develop a public affairs culture/focus in SoPA that is vibrant and inclusive

- Create "buy-in" from existing faculty and staff
- Develop a high quality consolidated SoPA communication piece, e.g. further refine the *SoPA Newsletter*
- Restructure the Winter Institute conference to be a collaborative, unifying event for the school
- Have more frequent school-side events addressing curricular and research issues

C. Recognize faculty and staff achievements & success

- Establish a fair, equitable reward and recognition system to encourage/acknowledge excellence
- Develop student-nominated school wide recognition/awards

Strategic Theme 4: Promoting internal and external collaboration

A. Internal collaboration

- SoPA Research Institute facilitates collaborative research by faculty and students within SoPA and with other schools and colleges
- Develop programs that will be shared with other SCSU units, e.g. health care economics and health care policy programs with School of Health and Human Services
- Allocate resources to the development of inter-disciplinary programs within SoPA
- Through SoPA Research Institute, develop a process to support and enable faculty and students to secure external funding
- Create a reward and recognition structure for faculty members and students engaging in research, especially collaborative research, through: (a) a working paper or brown bag series to share faculty and student research; (b) encouragement of use of the Boyer teacher/scholar

model within SoPA; and (c) faculty/student work in community engagement and civic responsibility

B. External collaboration

- Develop and implement a strategy that makes SoPA a partner of choice for employers
- Establish criteria to enhance and support faculty collaboration with community partners and employers (especially of SoPA student interns)
- Provide training opportunities for students and faculty to be ready to engage with community partners and employers
- Develop a process to align interests of community partners, employers, and donors, with SoPA programs and priorities
- Expand offerings of faculty/alumni/community partner socials
- Advertise or communicate within the School opportunities for external collaboration
- Work with various university offices to build databases of SoPA donors, partners, and employers
- Develop case statements for key fundraising priorities for SoPA
- Collaborate with the community on regional research and policy analysis
- Enhance SoPA faculty and staff access to technology and training as a means of supporting relationships with overseas university partners
- Develop funding to finance global collaborations
- Encourage social and academic exchanges across disciplinary boundaries with global partners
- Evaluate alternative options for overcoming resource constraints in global partnerships, e.g. using technology to teach at a distance versus face-to-face delivery of content.

IV.4 SoPA Strategic Results

As the faculty, staff and administration of SoPA move forward with implementation of this strategic plan, we expect to see improvement in critical factors that indicate our success. These results are multi-faceted and indicate increasing levels of organizational health and success across the school, as well as heightened satisfaction of all the stakeholders we serve, in addition to our faculty and staff. The results we aspire to attain are the following:

Strategic Theme 1: Empowering student-centered success

- Higher level of student/faculty interaction outside of the classroom
- Greater alumni engagement with the school
- More SoPA undergraduate and graduate majors
- Higher SoPA student retention and completion rates, particularly for students of color, worker learners, and other non-traditional groups
- Higher employment and graduate school placement rates of graduates
- Higher satisfaction levels of SoPA alumni with respect to their university experiences
- Higher satisfaction levels of current SoPA students, including students of color, worker/learners, veterans, and other groups

- Higher perceptions of graduating seniors regarding the quality of their educational experiences (e.g. higher rate of choice of an optional survey response such as “Definitely enroll again”)
- Higher proportion of SoPA graduates finding employment in the public affairs arena
- Higher levels of employer satisfaction with SoPA graduates

Strategic Theme 2: Innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship

- Higher fraction of faculty members collaborating in teaching, research and community outreach
- Greater participation by SoPA students in “high impact practices,” specifically undergraduate research, service learning & community-based learning, internship and other capstone experience, and diversity and global learning projects
- Greater success in achieving SoPA-level student learning outcomes/competencies at graduation (once these outcomes/competencies are developed)
- Greater number of seniors who complete community service and/or volunteer assignments
- Vigorous activity level of SoPA Research Institute
- Greater research funding acquired by SOPA faculty by funding category (NGO, Business, Government)
- Larger scale of internal and external research collaborations
- More faculty-student research projects on public affairs issues
- Greater leveraging of complementarities between SoPA graduate programs and the SoPA Research Institute

Strategic Theme 3: School-wide human resource excellence and adaptability

- Greater levels of faculty/staff satisfaction
- More funding to support faculty/staff development and SoPA infrastructure
- Strong evidence of a shared SoPA culture and identity
- Greater diversity in the SoPA faculty pool with respect to ethnicity, divergence of ideas, cultural anchors, and pedagogies which are celebrated
- Greater participation by SoPA faculty and departments in peer evaluation via Article 22 and mentoring

Strategic Theme 4: Promoting internal and external collaboration

- Higher rates of service learning participation
- Greater levels of joint research and proposal development
- More faculty involvement in team-teaching and multi-disciplinary courses
- More joint programs between SoPA and other schools and colleges
- Greater engagement with external stakeholders (research, civic education and leadership training projects)
- Greater engagement with overseas university partners in the areas of teaching, research and student and faculty exchanges

- Higher fraction of SoPA students participating in experiential learning activities
- Higher level of community partner engagement in and out of the classroom
- Higher rates of enrollment, as well as completion, of practica, internships, and other types of field experiences

IV.5 SoPA External Development Priorities

Execution of this strategic plan will require external, as well as internal, financial support. The Dean of the school is charged with marshalling internal resources by working with senior administration to address the most important priorities in the school. The Dean, in consultation with the SCSU Foundation, is also responsible for facilitating external development activities, a priority that will take on increasing importance in the years ahead due to the resource-constrained environment facing public higher education in the state and nation. Here are key fundraising goals identified by the task force:

1. Greater external funding for undergraduate and graduate scholarships, particularly scholarships for students interested in training in public affairs;
2. Greater external funding to attract and retain students from under-represented demographic groups who are interested in public affairs careers;
3. Greater external funding for students wishing to engage in experiential learning projects, e.g. internships and field experiences in the public affairs arena;
4. Greater external funding for faculty professional development, ranging from conference and other forms of research-related travel, software, hardware, and data acquisition, continuing education and training opportunities, and travel with students to support experiential learning;
5. Greater external funding for hiring new, talented faculty, e.g. endowed chairs, new lines to support new programs, and “superstar” faculty;
6. Achieving a level of external grant and contract funding that ensures long term financial sustainability for the SoPA Research Institute;
7. External funding for a new space for SoPA faculty, staff, and students, e.g. a new building downtown;
8. External funding for community partnership projects, e.g. an Academy of Elected officials.
9. External funding to cover expenses for visiting overseas scholars.

IV.6 A global dimension to SoPA

One of the reorganized university’s four “learning commitments” (“pillars”) is *Global and Cultural Understanding*. This learning commitment has not only great relevance to the work done by SoPA to train students to be stewards of the public interest, generate faculty and student research on public affairs issues, and provide service to the university and community on public affairs, but also to the work done by schools/colleges of public affairs in general. Students must understand that being a competent steward of the public interest in one’s own community necessitates being aware of trends and forces all around the globe. The U.S., Minnesota, and Central Minnesota economies are linked more than ever now to the economies of other countries. World migration flows are transforming the social, cultural, and demographic profiles of many countries. Advanced communication information retrieval

technologies can now bring all parts of the World to the doorstep of any community in the USA. To be a successful steward of the public interest in one's own community necessitates having a strong appreciation and understanding of other cultures, languages, and systems.

Research on best practices at the strongest schools and colleges of public affairs in the country suggests that SoPA's strategic plan must embody these crucial points. However, globalization cannot be a separate theme to our strategic plan, but must instead be integral to each of the themes. If one looks at the four strategic themes presented earlier in this document, each of them are aligned with globalization in some important way. Empowering student-centered success (theme 1) can be attained, for example, through recruiting more international students to SoPA programs and helping SoPA graduates find employment in overseas positions or in domestic organizations that focus on global projects. Innovative, integrated curriculum and scholarship (theme 2) is aided greatly by faculty collaboration in teaching and research on global issues and through outreach to overseas communities. Furthermore, theme 2 will be strengthened through a stronger focus by students and faculty on research, particularly externally funded research, on international economics, development, law enforcement, political systems, and geographic issues. Hiring more international faculty, faculty with international expertise, and bringing international visiting scholars to SoPA, will all help promote school-wide human resource excellence and adaptability (theme 3). Finally, heightened collaboration with globally-focused community partners will contribute success to the attainment of theme 4 ("Promoting internal and external collaboration").

Globalization in SoPA is visible already – we already have international programming, a portion of our faculty and student body is foreign-born, SoPA is hosting several foreign visiting scholars, there are strong and new international partnerships in place, and many of our faculty are doing research on global issues. However, there is much more that can, and should, be done in future years for SoPA to successfully live into its vision and mission. Thus, globalization permeates our entire strategic plan.

IV.7 SoPA's alignment with MnSCU priorities

In this section, we discuss some important recent developments in MnSCU that have very important implications for both this strategic plan and SoPA's future. In November, 2013, a system publication titled *Charting the Future for a Prosperous Minnesota* was released to the public. Work on this document began a year earlier, when Chancellor Rosenstone charged three workgroups comprising students, faculty, staff, presidents and trustees to recommend ways for the system's institutions to optimize contributions to the prosperity of Minnesota, given the changing economic, technological, and demographic environment in the state. What resulted from this work was 6 recommendations, quoted from the document below:

- (i) "Dramatically increase the success of all learners, especially those in diverse populations traditionally underserved by higher education;
- (ii) Develop a collaborative and coordinated academic planning process that advances affordability, transferability and access to our programs and services across the state;

- (iii) Certify student competencies and capabilities, expand pathways to accelerate degree completion through credit for prior learning, and foster the award of competency-based credit and degrees;
- (iv) Expand the innovative use of technology to deliver high quality online courses, strengthen classroom instruction and student services, and provide more individualized learning and advising;
- (v) Work together under new models to be the preferred provider of comprehensive workplace solutions through programs and services that build employee skills and solve real-world problems for communities and businesses across the state; and
- (vi) Redesign our financial and administrative models to reward collaboration, drive efficiencies and strengthen our ability to provide access to an extraordinary educational for all Minnesotans.”

In charting its own future, SoPA’s work must not only be aligned with our home university’s mission, vision, and values, but with the goals and priorities of the system as a whole. Specifically, our school’s stakeholders are best served if we make a strong effort to align our future work with the 6 recommendations above.

One example of how SoPA can align its programming with the 6 recommendations above is through our plans to offer an MPA. Currently, Northern Minnesota down to, but not including, the metro area, does not have any MPA program.¹⁶ SoPA could take the lead in serving this region by collaborating with other institutions in the system that help us serve this region, e.g. Bemidji State University, MSU-Moorhead, and Southwest State University. In fact, our proposal to offer the MPA calls for sister institutions to work with us in offering concentrations/tracks in the program by contributing their faculty, facilities and courses. With respect to the 6 recommendations above, the collaboration will

- (i) help to make MPA programming available to all kinds of student groups in landlocked Northwest Minnesota, including those in diverse populations traditionally underserved;
- (ii) result from a collaborative and coordinated planning process that allows for seamless transfer of courses between partners and with high levels of affordability for students;
- (iii) allow for the granting of competency-based credit when feasible;
- (iv) make full use of leading edge technology, allowing for flexibility in mode of delivery;
- (v) create programming byproducts that lead to comprehensive workplace solutions, e.g. certificates; and
- (vi) be based on a model of financial sustainability.

This is just one example of many programming examples¹⁷ where the school’s work enhances the value of the system’s work. Finally, as the system’s only public policy school, we are in the unique

¹⁶ There are three MPA programs in neighboring states –University of North Dakota, a jointly offered program at Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, and a program at University of South Dakota.

¹⁷ Other examples are the MA in Criminal Justice, the MA in Public Safety Executive Leadership (PSEL), and the MS in Applied Economics.

position of being able to help the system understand the implications of new system policies and practices based on the recommendations above.

IV.8 SoPA Strategic Plan Implementation

Below is a projected timeline for executing the strategic plan. It is important to emphasize that these lists are not exhaustive and many of the goals below are minimum goals that will be constantly reviewed and updated

Within Next Year

1. Submission of application to offer the MPA and final system approval of the application
2. Develop a student recruiting strategy that addresses recruiting of students in general, students of color, worker learners, new entering freshmen (NEF), and other groups
3. Develop a plan, in collaboration with the Dean of Undergraduate College/Associate Provost for Student Success, for at least one bridge program with SoPA's top 3 two-year partners (Anoka-Ramsey Community College, St. Cloud Technical & Community College, and North Hennepin Community College)
4. Require each department to incorporate "high impact practices," specifically undergraduate research, service learning & community based learning, internships, and diversity and global learning, into departmental goals; Form school goals based on revised department goals
5. Seek input from alumni, employers, and other forms of market input on how SoPA programs can best incorporate high impact practices
6. Develop a plan for how SoPA programs can accommodate students who must primarily learn at a distance and which addresses the role of web-based instruction
7. Convene a task force in the school that works with the staff of the Associate Provost for Student Success to develop an enrollment plan for the school and complete it
8. Hire 3-5 new faculty members, who would come on board AY 2014/15;
9. Grow SoPA Foundation account to a balance of \$10,000;
10. Identify a common hour during the school-day when there are no SoPA classes offered; This hour could be used for school-wide activities, e.g. labs offered by SoPARI or colloquia
11. Offer at least one SoPA honors course co-taught by faculty members from different SoPA departments
12. Complete Article 20 work in SoPA, with a focus on addressing changing roles and expectations of faculty and the changing context of higher education, e.g. the role of technology and the need to provide greater support for experiential learning
13. Work on the development of one (1) program that will be shared with another school/college, e.g. a health care economics or health care policy program shared with SHHS
14. Submit proposal for a SoPA course on statistics for the social sciences or research methods;
15. Implement partnerships with Zhou Enlai School of Government at Nankai University, School of Business at Sichuan Agricultural University, and School of Economics and Research Institute for Economics and Management at Southwestern University of Finance and Economics
16. Bring 1-2 faculty from overseas as visiting scholars
17. Have at least three active, thriving community engagement projects in progress
18. Form a SoPA External Advisory Board
19. Crystallize a plan for online instructional delivery and use of the Twin Cities Graduate Center
20. Provide a case for an international vision in programming, research, and service

21. Establish a plan for an assessment structure for SoPA and its programs
22. Formulate a hiring plan for SoPA that addresses ethnic and other forms of diversity
23. Develop a technology plan that is based on retention of in-house IT support
24. Institute “brownbag” lunches for faculty and “round tables” on topics such as tourism, planning, climate, and the Olympics, which students can sit in on
25. Plan an event that recognizes students being inducted into honor societies and for presenting research at conferences
26. Start a “National Issue Forums” series, where students work on a national issue of great interest; Start with pre-packaged topic from the national office
27. Find ways for team-teaching in SoPA to be easier to implement than it currently is
28. Develop an online vision for the school

Within 3 years

1. Launch MPA program
2. Show successful implementation (approval of program and matriculation of students, for example) of at least one program shared with another school or college
3. Demonstrate success from implementation of a bridge program with two-year partners
4. Demonstrate success by the school in the implementation of “high impact practices,” e.g. for each practice implemented show one example of successful implementation
5. Demonstrate success from implementation of the enrollment plan
6. Have the SoPA Research Institute secure at least \$250,000 in grant funding
7. Hire 5-10 new permanent faculty
8. Have 3-5 successful international partnerships ongoing, including in Canada
9. Have a strong SoPA faculty, student, and curricular presence at Alnwick
10. Design, in consultation with University Honors Program staff, obtain approval for, and launch a SoPA Honors Program with SoPA prefix courses
11. Develop and start up a cross-disciplinary training/outreach program for in-service leaders in the region, e.g. an Academy of Elected Officials
12. Have at least 50% of our students doing internships
13. Have SoPA’s assessment structure fully operational

Within 5 years

1. Obtain system approval for a school-wide undergraduate degree program, e.g. a BA in Public Affairs, BA in Public Policy, or related type of multi- and inter-disciplinary program, that includes SoPA level courses
2. School-wide graduate program produces its first cohort of graduates;
3. Have in place a highly accurate enrollment plan, with proven results, that can be updated annually and which drives program planning and resource allocation in the school
4. Hire 10-20 new permanent faculty;
5. Have an approved plan for a separate facility on- or off-campus with at least “strong prospects” for a named endowment;
6. SoPA Research Institute achieves full fiscal sustainability;
7. Honors program is highly active and successful
8. Complete an evaluation of the effectiveness of SoPA’s assessment structure
9. Demonstrate success in implementation of a hiring plan, particularly with respect to diversity and inclusiveness

Within 10 years

1. SoPA has its own building;
2. Obtain NASPAA (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration) accreditation of MPA (5 years from launch of program)
3. An endowment with income sufficient to fund scholarships, faculty development, student experiential learning and other learning activities;
4. A thriving, profitable SoPARI
5. SoPA is in the “top 5” for schools/colleges of Public Affairs for all schools of Carnegie classifications at or below Masters One;
6. Blueprints for a doctoral program in public affairs or policy is completed.

IV.9 Work Plans selected for implementation

During its last full-day retreat, the task force focused on developing some work plans for operationalizing the Strategic Objectives discussed in section IV.3. Very early in the discussion, it became clear that attaining many of these objectives would require a lot of work and there was no way the school could implement work plans for all the objectives at the same time. Therefore, it was decided that work plans would be developed now for only those objectives viewed as the most feasible. The task force agreed that after some of those plans were put into action and results evaluated, the school could examine other objectives and develop work plans for those. An advantage of this approach is that not only does it economize on workload, it allows for a learning process that can inform the development and implementation of work plans in the future. In this section, we take a few of the Strategic Objectives discussed in section IV.3 and present feasible, albeit modest, work plans for each. Some of these work plans only require relatively little time and collective effort, but completion of them would mark the very first steps in the plan’s execution. Once these plans are completed, more ambitious, time-intensive, and challenging work plans can be executed and formulated, Note that for some objectives, there is more than one action project.

Strategic Objective 1A: Expand Efforts to recruit students new to college/university and transfer students to SOPA programs

Action Project 1: Expand resource base

Event/Action Description: Generate scholarships, endowments and assistantships

Estimated Start Date: As soon as Strategic Plan is approved

Estimated Completion Date: By January 1, 2015 – Raise \$25,000 and distribute across 17 current scholarship accounts assigned to the school

Point Person: Dean

Potential Team Lead and Members: Foundation, department chairs, program directors, director of SOPA Research Institute

Dependencies: In order for this work plan to be implemented, some things have to happen first. We also need to develop electronic and web communication pieces to showcase alumni who are influential.

Expected Deliverables:

- Increase scholarships, endowments and assistantships through partnering efforts with Foundation and alumni office
- Engage Alumni and donors through events, web presence, and printed materials showing current students and alumni
- Assess current donor scholarships and assess whether they can be expanded

Action Project 2: Update and create recruitment materials

Event/Action Plan Description: Develop and update web communication pieces, showcase student/alumni success stories, develop communication pieces for guidance/transfer counselors

Estimated Start Date: As soon as strategic plan is approved

Estimated Completion Date: Ongoing – Fall/Spring/Summer

Point Person: Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator

Potential Team Lead and Members: Student Relations Coordinator, IT Support Staff-person, University Communications, Printing Services, department chairs, program directors, Foundation, Alumni office

Dependencies: For this work plan to be implemented, a new SoPA web page needs to be developed. Faculty and Alumni office need to contribute awareness of successful student/alumni stories, e.g. “Points of Pride” (University Communications)

Expected Deliverables: Recruitment materials for prospective students

Action Project 3: Every SoPA student goes to 4 hour CARE Anti-Racism workshop

Event/Action Description: Students required to attend CARE workshops to expand inter cultural/public policy/global and public affairs, awareness and emphasis

Estimated Start Date: ASAP

Estimated Completion Date: None given

Point Person: CARE office (CARE Coordinator)

Potential Team Lead and Members: SoPA Curriculum Committee

Dependencies: Name - Budget

Expected Deliverables:

- Anti-Racist (SoPA) awareness curriculum/public affairs/gender/race/class, integrate into the SoPA wide course

Strategic Objective: 2A: Develop a public affairs focus and competency in all SOPA graduates

Action Project: SOPA set of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) developed by a faculty-led committee

Event/Action Description: Develop a common set of SLOs, including an inventory of what we are currently doing

Estimated Start Date: Spring, 2014

Estimated Completion Date: Fall, 2014

Point Person: Chair of SoPA Curriculum Committee

Potential Team Lead and Members: SoPA Curriculum Committee, a representative from every SoPA program, and employers/outside contacts

Dependencies: None listed

Expected Deliverables:

- SoPA wide SLO list available to all faculty, prospective students/parents, current students/employers

Strategic Objective Theme 2B: Align SoPA curricula with community and workforce needs

Action Project: Integrate experiential civic engagement/service learning into SoPA curriculum

Event/Plan Description: Faculty members engaged with each SoPA program have to identify a way of integrating civic engagement/service learning into SoPA curriculum, e.g. through internships, service learning activities, and other experiences such as simulations (Model UN, mock court, mock trial, 2-week Camelot experiments), and study abroad.

Estimated Start Date: January, 2014

Estimated Completion Date: August, 2014

Point Person: Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator

Potential Team Lead and Members: Department chairs, faculty in SoPA who coordinate internships

Dependencies: Research Institute can strengthen this action project

Expected Deliverables:

- List of courses or experiences providing civic engagement/service learning opportunities are approved for each program in the SoPA curriculum

Strategic Objective: 3A: Create an approach to faculty and staff recruitment and retention to achieve school-wide objectives

Action Project: HR Excellence

Event/Action Description: School establishes a framework, within the context of the 5 Article 22 criteria, for helping faculty with retention, tenure, and promotion

Estimated Start Date: January, 2014

Estimated Completion Date: Yearly - Ongoing

Point Person: Dean

Potential Team Lead and Members: Chairs, Administrative Director

Dependencies: None listed

Expected Deliverables:

Clear guidelines for promotion and success, clear approach to articulating performance expectations for incoming faculty, and recognition given to different types of scholarship, depending upon discipline and skills of faculty member

Strategic Objective: 3C: Recognize faculty and staff achievements and success

Action Project: Plan and implement different types of celebratory events

Event/Action Plan Description: Celebration of faculty and staff successes in facilitating opportunities for students to engage with the community

Estimated Start Date: Annually – As soon as strategic plan is approved

Estimated Completion Date: End of Spring Semester, 2014

Point Person: Dean and Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator

Potential Team Lead and Members: Department chairs, Dean's office staff

Dependencies: None listed

Expected Deliverables:

- Facilitate awards for teaching, research, service learning, community engagement, business awards for interns

Strategic Objective 4B: Cultivate and enhance relations with external stakeholders

Action Project 1: Faculty/Alumni Socials, luncheons for key stakeholders where key SoPA personnel can discuss how we can attain joint objectives

Event/Action Description: None given

Estimated Start Date: January, 2014

Estimated Completion Date: Fall, 2014

Point Person: Dean and Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator

Potential Team Lead and Members: Department chairs

Dependencies: None listed

Expected Deliverables:

- Once a semester – Friends/Alumni gathering
- Once a year - down in the Twin Cities

Reception – scheduling donors – acknowledging students

Action Project 2: Database Gap Project

Event/Action Plan Description: Identify existing and missing elements in database on alumni, employers, donors, community partners, research partners

Estimated Start Date: None given

Estimated Completion Date: None given

Point Person: Experiential Learning & Outreach Coordinator

Potential Team Lead and Members: None listed

Dependencies: Linkages to Alumni/Donor and Research and Sponsored Programs databases are required to get started

Expected Deliverables: Instructions to faculty on how to access existing data, list of gaps

IV.10 Assurance of continuous improvement

Any strategic plan must have a built-in “feedback loop,” meaning that as we proceed to implement the plan, we must be able to assess our results and make mid-stream adjustments in the operational frame of the plan as needed. There will always be uncertainty regarding the results of implementing a particular objective. Sometimes, an objective turns out to be difficult to achieve, either with respect to required financial resources, time, or faculty and staff capacity. In that case, the objective may have to be modified or even eliminated. There is no guarantee that any of our objectives will be feasible and we may find along the path of implementation that new objectives or work plans, motivated by failures or successes of other objectives or work plans, must be created. There must be flexibility in our plan for continuous improvement. Accordingly, results from implementing this plan will be assessed annually and, where needed, pieces of the plan will be modified based on those results. Modification may include, for example, reframing of some objectives, elimination, or addition of objectives. Furthermore, timelines for implementation and particular details of each work plan are subject to modification. This plan is a “living document,” subject to change as the internal and external environments change.

IV.11 A closing thought: What is the role of departments in this plan?

One feature of our strategic plan is that all strategic themes, objectives, results, and action strategies are school-wide, not department-specific. For example, none of our action strategies call for department A to take action B. We view this feature as a notable strength of the plan because it encourages programmatic autonomy. This plan could be easily executed in the absence of departments and the presence of departments is in no way an impediment to successful execution. We would argue that departments are actually superfluous in our strategic plan. In fact, some of the most prestigious schools of public affairs in the country, e.g. the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at University of Minnesota, have no departments. Departments are relevant to our strategic plan in only one way, which is practical: When we get down to granular work plans to achieve our goals, work (and resource allocation) will sometimes need to be divided across departments. However, this document does not delve into that level of granularity, but instead we leave that to the execution phase.

Appendix A

PROGRAMS IN SoPA

Undergraduate programs

BA in Criminal Justice Studies
BA in Economics
BA in Business Economics
BS in Mathematical Economics
BA in Geography
BA in Travel and Tourism
BS in Land Surveying and Mapping Sciences
BA in Planning and Community Development
BA in Social Studies Education
BA in Political Science
BA in International Relations
BA in Public Administration (suspended, in teach-out phase)

Graduate programs

MS in Criminal Justice Studies
MS in Public Safety Executive Leadership
MS in Applied Economics
MS in Geography: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) emphasis
MS in Geography: Tourism Planning and Development emphasis
MS in Public and Non-Profit Institutions (suspended, in teach-out phase)

Minor programs

Criminal Justice Studies
Economics
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
Planning and Community Development; Heritage Preservation

Special programs

Peace Officer Standards Training (POST) Law Enforcement Academic Core
Peace Officer Standards Training (POST) Law Enforcement Skills Training
5-year BA/MS Program in Applied Economics
Graduate certificate in Geographic Information Systems
Certificate in Health Care Administration

Bachelor of Elective Studies in Land Surveying¹⁸
Bachelor of Elective Studies in Geography

¹⁸ The Bachelor of Elective Studies (BES) degree is offered through the School of Continuing Studies and is an option that is available to students who essentially want, in consultation with faculty, to design their own undergraduate degree programs. The ordinary rule for students entering the BS in Land Surveying & Mapping Science program is do a two-year degree in Land Surveying at a 2-year college with which the Department of Geography & Planning has an articulation agreement. Some students coming into the BS program would have just graduated with the 2-year degree, whereas others may have completed the degree earlier and have been out in the workforce. Then, there are those students who wish to be trained in land surveying and cartography who, for whatever reason, did not a 2-year degree in this field. To accommodate this last category of students, the Department of Geography & Planning collaborates with the School of Continuing Studies to offer the BES with a Land Surveying & Mapping Science emphasis. For these students, it wouldn't make sense to go back to a 2-year school to complete a degree. Instead, students who wish to complete requirements for the degree in Land Surveying & Mapping Science can use the BES vehicle. One difference between the BS and the BES degree is the BS degree requires 9 credits of calculus, whereas the BES degree requires only 6 credits.

Appendix B

Report by Dr. Roby Robertson, Facilitator of SoPA Strategic Planning Retreat held
on July 29, 2011

Summary of St. Cloud State Strategic Planning Retreat

School of Public Affairs

July 29, 2011

Dr. Roby Robertson

On July 29, 2011, I served as consultant and primary facilitator for the School of Public Affairs' (SoPA) first strategic planning retreat.

Prior to the retreat, I had a number of useful discussions on the phone with Interim Dean Bodvarsson; was given a number of university-wide planning documents; reviewed several survey results from faculty, students and external stakeholders; and had further discussions on the phone with the Provost. Upon my arrival I met with the Associate Provost and with the Transition Workgroup of SoPA.

Interim Dean Bodvarsson had previously organized the retreat participants around internal stakeholders (primarily faculty and one Center Director), students (both undergraduate and graduate) and external stakeholders (both alumni as well as employers of SoPA program graduates).

The Interim Dean and I agreed upon a strategy whereby I would lead a set of discussions first with the group overall and then through a series of small group efforts to explore ways to begin the process of 'defining' the nature and elements of SoOPA.

Challenge: The two primary challenges we identified prior to the discussion were:

- a) *Begin building a School perspective and culture among faculty, staff and students;*
- b) *Start the process of clarifying the School's 'mission' and beginning efforts of strategic planning for SoPA.*

Threats: Both the Interim Dean and I agree that two overarching threats to the School exist:

- a) *Existing culture is primarily built around the existing departments which have a long history and separate identity under the previous college structure (College of Social Sciences)*
- b) *New programs and directions of the School must not be simple 'add-on's' to the existing programmatic arenas but must find ways to consolidate and build new perspectives beyond the existing programmatic structure of SoPA's 'departmental' perspectives.*

We began the discussion with the University's Four Pillars and I suggested that SoPA 'success' would be defined heavily around these four pillars. We focused our time on the pillars on community engagement and the active learning perspectives. Participants were quick to note a number of existing efforts within the departments around the first two efforts, but the challenge I gave them was to begin to think of them beyond departmental 'activities' and to examine how they could be remade both in SoPA as well specifically around the pillars. For example, internships can be seen in both the community engagement and the active learning dimensions, but the challenge is to begin to see such efforts as more 'involving' the community in defining the various experiences as well as more richly developing a 'School perspective' on internship experiences.

The discussion on sustainability and globalization was brief, but indicated that both the university and the School need to find common ground on how to effectively integrate these two pillars into active and measurable goals and objectives in the future.

Our first major exercise focused on a case study where I defined a similar retreat to be held in 2021, on the 10th anniversary of SoPA. I challenged three work groups (placing folks in the groups from different departments and different constituencies deliberately) to examine what 'remains strong' that preceded the School (thus was important to 'maintain'); what was new and developed from a School perspective; and what have been 'unintended consequences' of the development of a School (the latter is common to any major organizational restructuring, both positive and negatively).

The intent of the exercise was to encourage perspectives on what may be developed within the school as well as to identify on-going issues of existing programs. I believe the groups were extremely effective in all of these efforts and allowed the various folks to present ideas that they really wanted to 'protect' as well as to challenge them to find SoPA-based perspectives.

Each group created a list of the three perspectives that had common patterns as well as particular unique ideas. The Interim Dean has the summary of those lists. I would note four things from this exercise.

- 1) Except for a couple of cases, the groups did not 'name' individual degrees/services/centers, but spoke of them more broadly;
- 2) Faculty are more prepared for collaborative work across departmental lines because many identify existing programs that do so currently.
- 3) All three groups appeared genuinely excited about building a 'school professionalism' that would cut across departmental lines for the students and graduates.
- 4) There is clear understanding that joining together requires more than an organizational chart or even common programs, but a different perspective among faculty and program leaders about how to develop a school perspective.

In the afternoon, we then utilized our groups again to make a 'first attempt' at a 'common mission' statement. The only 'restriction' I gave the groups was not to use in the mission statement the names of the four existing departments! When I began the exercise, my desire was to get the three groups to write mission statements for the college built around the common themes of all mission statements: who, what, how (and implied where). Each group came up with very different perspectives and the

discussion of those differences was a very fruitful ‘common’ exercise. Each group had elements that should aid in defining a final mission statement. A reminder, however, the ‘who’ part includes both the *provider* (SoPA) as well as to *whom the program ‘impacts’* (each group did a good job on the latter, not so strong on the former). The ‘what’ SoPA will be doing is obviously the ‘active’ dimension of the mission statement and the language each group utilized is extremely appropriate to defining this element. The challenge I left the group is that the ‘what’ has to be active and alive and must be *specific to the School* itself (if it can be used easily by other Schools and Colleges, it isn’t specific enough). I would urge a mission statement that clearly reflects that professional development of programs will be tied to the broader professional community in all three sectors but that the ‘engaged’ part of the definition not be lost.

On the other hand, each group was especially attuned to the idea that who that will be served will be much more than ‘traditional’ students and encompasses community in a variety of ways (training, outreach, continuing education).

Our final effort of the day focused on developing a few simple ‘goal’ statements around the four pillars. Since the ‘community engagement’ component is so important to SoOPA, each group came up with two goals in this area. Additional goals were defined on active learning, globalization, and sustainability. The Interim Dean has the summaries of those results.

One of the issues that surfaced was the development of an MPA program early by SoPA. There was no disagreement with that goal, but there did seem to be considerable concern as to whether it would: a) be perceived as something for the school or for one department; b) whether it would really be a ‘community engaged’ project. Both are essential.

Additional discussion linked some of the morning’s discussion about developing new programs with a clear school perspective and with building a School culture and perspective.

Conclusions from the Retreat:

- 1) There will be an ongoing challenge and resistance from departmental faculty about a ‘school perspective’ but the folks involved in the retreat are aware of those concerns and see a real advantage of developing a ‘school’ model (over simply a new ‘box’ for the existing departments).
- 2) Early successes, even on a small scale, will be important in building a SOPA perspective across the faculty, staff, students and external stakeholders. Find ‘easy’ first efforts and celebrate them! (methods/stat common courses, as example?)
- 3) Developing ‘new leadership’ within the faculty and center professionals is important in developing a school perspective. Identifying senior assistant professors and associate professors who can share collaborative leadership roles across SoPA will aid in developing a school perspective.
- 4) External community leadership are often confused by School and College perspectives, thus involving them ‘across normal’ disciplinary lines is critical—have them involved in new certificate program development, training elements, etc.

- 5) Process is critical but results are essential. 'Developing' is going to be something that defines a lot of activity over the next 2-3 years, but having real programmatic and space 'success' is very relevant. Things should get named SoPA a LOT over the next 2-3 years!
- 6) Utilize material in similar Schools of Public Affairs around the country. Again, there is no one model of a public affairs school, but there are several that share commonalities with St. Cloud and the particular programs within SoPA.
- 7) Build 'brand' and organizational loyalty to SoPA. Labels are important, especially when faculty, students and community begin to utilize them as 'normal'.
- 8) Although all four pillars should be part of the strategic plan of SoPA, make sure you develop strong goals and objectives on the community engagement dimension. It should be an important signature of the School.
- 9) Create a culture within SoPA that education is more than degrees and classes, but is an extension of research and service to the community.
- 10) Be conscious of the variety of definitions of 'community' (local, state, national and international) but do not lose sight of the location of St. Cloud as a critical regional university in Minnesota.