

# University-Wide Initiatives Futures Planning Team

## Report to Steering Committee

January 2009

### **Purpose:**

The University-Wide Initiatives Futures Planning Team resumed the Shawnee 20/20 planning process – phase 2. The purpose of this report is to summarize the Team’s efforts in this regard.

### **Members:**

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### **Summary Report:**

The Team reviewed the draft summary report of recommendations (attached) from the previous 20/20 planning phase in order to transition to the current effort. Toward that end, the team also reviewed the Chancellor of Ohio Board of Regent’s *Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2008 – 2017* (<http://www.uso.edu/strategicplan>) and focused specifically upon the three items identified by the President in her correspondence dated September 19, 2008 re: 20/20 Planning – Phase 2, which included:

- **20/20 Planning – Phase 2**

- Centers of Excellence

The Team reviewed information about the Centers of Excellence as described by the BOR September 16, 2008 Trustees conference document. The implications to Shawnee State University were discussed. This document provided a glimpse of the Chancellor’s vision of mission differentiation and the importance of collaborative efforts between and among Ohio’s thirteen public universities to serve as drivers of regional and state economies. It gave the Team a glimpse into future institutional reporting expectations as relates to Centers of Excellence, institution-specific accountability measures and good faith budget estimates, and made clear that enhanced funding would be made available for the Centers. Finally, the emphasis upon graduate and professional education and reliance upon benchmarking metrics using National Science Foundation (NSF) to compare against provided the Team with an indication of the impact that Centers of Excellence and research will have in future funding priorities of the Chancellor.

- Facilities

The Team considered a statement regarding facility needs for the Department of Natural Sciences.

- Lifelong Learning Initiatives

The Team contemplated the USO Key Strategies involving Lifelong Learning Initiatives (pages 56 and 60 of the *Strategic Plan*) that address providing greater flexibility for adult courses, including more online courses and the recognition of the life experiences and knowledge that adult learners over the age of 55 bring to higher education.

There was considerable discussion concerning other components of the Chancellor's plan that could have a direct impact upon Shawnee State University. These included the potential future loss of associate degrees and the enhanced opportunities for adding graduate programming

- **Revised Charge to the Futures Team:**

The Team concentrated upon the President's Revised Charge and updated assumptions provided. The direction given was for the Team to complete the assigned tasks by:

- Reworking previously developed recommendations (except those already assigned to focus groups); make new recommendations as desired,
- Focusing upon methods of regional and statewide collaboration that link SSU to the State's community colleges and provide direct articulation of associate of arts and associate of science degrees and economic development initiatives for the region,
- Identifying fields and activities for Centers of Excellence (using interim guidelines developed by the IUC provosts located at: <http://www.shawnee.edu/off/ri/plan/guidelines.html> that enhance SSU's mission in the region and "benchmarks" of SSU's learning environment that should be developed and marketed that consider the new list of peer institutions assigned to SSU by the Ohio Board of Regents found at: [http://www.shawnee.edu/off/ri/plan/Final%20Shawnee%20State%20Institutions%20from%20USO%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.shawnee.edu/off/ri/plan/Final%20Shawnee%20State%20Institutions%20from%20USO%20(2).pdf)

- **Restarting the 20/20 Planning Process - Review of original recommendations.** The Team reviewed the initial seven recommendations as submitted in July 2008 within the context of the revised presidential charge and the USO *Strategic Plan*, as follows:

1. *"We propose that Shawnee State review and revise its business processes, program development procedures, and communication methods to provide more efficient and responsive processes that will result in higher student satisfaction, more responsive program offerings, and proactively address new state mandates."*

Team members reflected on the original intent of this recommendation which was to address service processes that directly impact students beginning with their first point of interaction with SSU as an applicant through the new-student services and business interactions to the ongoing needs such as advising, etc. The importance of this proposal is increased when viewed from the perspective of the USO *Strategic Plan*. SSU's ability to proactively respond to student needs and to address perceived internal system barriers directly impacts recruitment and retention of students.

Since the original planning discussions, the University has already undertaken several initiatives to address this proposal, including the implementation of online credit card payments via CashNet (implemented Fall 2008), the integration of the bookstore with the registration process (scheduled for release Spring 2009), and the investment to install the infrastructure required for the BlackBoard business enterprise system that enables the implementation of various service options (implemented Fall 2008 with service decisions to be recommended by assigned AQIP team). It was determined that the effort and resources required to improve the services to which students experience must continue in order to enhance and streamline these processes via newer technologies and organizational realignment.

The Team discussed the idea of the “one-stop shop” concept as being a natural extension of service initiatives that have already occurred and strongly recommends pursuit of this form of service operation.

This original recommendation also incorporated ideas related to increased recruitment and retention through the offering of new academic programs. The initial discussion identified the need to utilize external expertise to develop marketing and/or business plans for the generation of new academic offerings. The consensus of the group was that the need for this type of initiative was even more essential given the USO key strategies that involve significant programmatic changes facing Shawnee State that include: the anticipated transition from associates to bachelors’ programs, the increased emphasis upon graduate program offerings, the expectation of increased flexibility for adult education, and the emphasis being placed on online programming.

Finally, the initial recommendation considered the issue of proactively addressing the new state mandates. With the adoption of the USO *Strategic Plan* that addresses benchmarking along with the directives being received from the Chancellor about reporting accountability metrics, the Team felt strongly that SSU should continue to adopt state of the art technologies that will expand system capabilities needed for tracking and reporting data. The University has also begun a concerted effort in this regard with its recent upgrade of the Cognos reporting tool and the upfront training of key officials and staff required to effectively utilize this system. This effort requires sustained energies and investment in order for key university staff to be able to take advantage of heightened expertise utilizing this sophisticated reporting system.

**Status: This proposal, particularly the research and possible adoption of a one-stop shop concept for student services, continues as a high priority for this Team.**

2. *“We propose that Shawnee State dedicate funding to an Entrepreneurship Center because the Center could positively impact student enrollment and future career success as well as local economic development.”*

The Team renewed its belief that this proposal is in keeping with the USO *Strategic Plan’s* emphasis upon the University as a driver of economic development. Team members were convinced that the development of an entrepreneurship center is only feasible with significant dedication and commitment of resources. This proposal is viewed by many as “on target” with the Chancellor’s ultimate goal of higher education

pushing economic renewal. The Team believes that this proposal warrants consideration as a long-term goal.

**Status: This proposal needs further definition and refinement.**

3. *“We propose that the University expand its partnerships with two-year institutions, providing a seamless transition into a baccalaureate program at SSU because it provides a needed service for regional associate degree graduates and aligns with new State objectives for higher education.”*

The Team felt that the priority level of this proposal needed to be increased due to its direct application to the key strategies of the USO *Strategic Plan*. In addition this proposal fits perfectly with selected assumptions presented by the President and specific to the revised charge to the Futures Teams, to wit:

- The University will develop new graduate and undergraduate programming and will migrate current associate degree programs to baccalaureate and/or graduate programs, and
- The University will need to provide programming that serves our mission, our region, and citizens throughout the state. Addressing such needs will be done pursuant to the USO goals and in collaboration with other USO institutions and State of Ohio departments. Solutions to meeting identified needs will mean providing access for regional students to programming other than SSU’s and programming specifically linked to economic development activities in the region, and
- The University will actively participate in USO and regional partnership initiatives.

This proposal is also aligned with the Academic Futures Team’s proposals for new programs and degrees and is supportive of three specific initiatives submitted by the Academic Futures Team which are:

- Master’s Degree in Education
- Bachelor of Health Science
- Associate of Technical Studies with Tech Prep Connections

Other points concerning this proposal include the need for: (1) conducting an inventory of existing partnerships SSU has with community colleges and other agencies, (2) publication of this information to avoid people working at cross purposes, and (3) the generation of campus-wide feedback and brain-storming opportunities to identify other partnering possibilities.

**Status: This proposal is essential to SSU meeting the USO strategic plan mandates as relates to partnering and collaborative initiatives.**

4. *“We propose that Shawnee State take a proactive role in developing a student-friendly community environment because increases in enrollment and retention are directly related to student satisfaction beyond academics.”*

The Team discussed that the need to improve opportunities for students within the community was an especially important undertaking given the University's targeted enrollment of 5300 by 2017. The need for improved "town/gown" relationships is a pivotal component in order to fulfill the President's stated assumptions that, *"growth will come from increased yield from recruitment of new and transfer students, new and sustained post-secondary programming, and improved course completion and graduation rates. Staff and infrastructure to support such growth must be planned for and supported."*

Some of the ideas that were originally generated were felt to continue to be appropriate, such as: developing a central information source and master calendar that offers quick and easy access to information on all aspects of the operation (the master calendar and space reservation procedures will soon be available on the University's web site), installing kiosks for convenient access in public areas, considering an academic advising center, expanding participation of SSU staff and students in community activities/events, etc.

**Status: This proposal is crucial to long-term growth of SSU and should be assigned for AQIP action.**

5. *"We propose that resources be dedicated for the expansion of student activities because it will lead to increased enrollment and retention and produces well-educated and well-rounded citizens since the education of our student is our responsibility outside of the classroom as well as in."*

The Team recognizes that this proposal involves an obvious and essential need and that it is being appropriately addressed by the Student Affairs Futures Team. The University Futures Team acknowledges the importance of University staff being engaged in student programming and activities. The goal is to provide an environment that is enriching and exciting for students that will, in turn, improve students' retention and ultimately their progress toward the completion of their programs of study. We realize that everyone on campus plays a part in creating this type of community and support system. The Team members are very active in current student functions and commit their support to continue in this regard and to offer assistance to the Student Affairs Futures Team.

**Status: This proposal needs further definition and refinement.**

6. *"We propose that Shawnee State develop a culture of professional development, where training and educational needs of employees are met and addressed, because the on-going educational growth of the University's employees directly affects the educational product and the level of satisfaction obtained by our students."*

SSU provides for the professional development of its staff and faculty through a myriad of ways and dedicated resources. This proposal is intended to encourage the development of a more structured approach to this effort.

**Status: This proposal needs further definition and refinement.**

7. *“We propose that the University establish a mechanism to enhance the communications between advancement and the university community and to expand alumni participation and support; we want to continue our efforts to bridge the gap between state funding and student needs and continue to forge a strong philanthropic support base throughout the region.”*

The Team spent some time discussing the ramifications of the newly configured state subsidy formula that focuses upon the outcomes of course completion and degree attainment as opposed to enrollment. The USO key strategy that addresses affordability (page 68) was reviewed and the expectation of increased levels of institutional aid to respond to the Chancellor’s objective of affordability was obvious. The original ideas generated in previous planning meetings associated with this proposal were reviewed and felt to be applicable to the current planning efforts. *In fact, the Team felt that the effort to raise scholarship funding sources must be a major impetus if SSU is going to be able to fulfill this obligation.* The University has already engaged in this endeavor via its involvement in the *O CAN* scholarship promotion as well as the concerted efforts toward identifying additional sources of revenue specifically targeted to need-based scholarships.

The Team reconsidered and restates its support of the ideas that were previous generated such as: the need to find new and multiple avenues for scholarship funds both for merit and need-based aid, additional resources needed to provide grants for faculty and staff professional development, increased unrestricted or discretionary sources of funding, continuing to invest in the present and future facilities, prioritizing of new building investments (discussion of the stated needs from Natural Sciences for increased and upgraded space was held – particularly important in order to tap into funds designated for STEMM programming), and responding to the push being realized by the increase in residential students for intramural and new sporting facilities, etc.

**Status: This proposal needs further definition and refinement and is recommended for strategic team discussion.**

- **Centers of Excellence**

A document outlining the characteristics for centers of excellence prepared by the IUC Provosts (June 23, 2008) was reviewed. According to the list, Centers of Excellence should incorporate such attributes as:

- Serve as an organizing system for the best or unique programs on one campus, across campuses, or throughout the state,
- Provide the citizens of Ohio with access to knowledge, discovery, expertise, performances, or art that would not be accessible without the center’s presence,
- Demonstrate extraordinary achievement in science, application, practice, or performance,
- Attract significant numbers of national and international students, and faculty,
- Whenever possible, be multidisciplinary.

Additionally, the IUC Provosts indicated that Centers of Excellence should, “be a defining niche for its institution and . . .serve to integrate outstanding scholarship with academic programs at undergraduate or graduate levels.”

A number of ideas have been identified as possible Centers of Excellence for Shawnee State. The University Futures Team members’ ideas were in concert with those already generated via a campus-wide call for suggestions and proposed ideas. According to the Academic Futures Report, suggestions/proposals received as of December 2008 included areas such as:

- Game Design and Practice
- Small Town Revitalization or Center for Rust Belt Renaissance
- Pre-Medical Preparation
- Applied Health Sciences
- Undergraduate Teaching or Learning and Teaching
- International Programs and Activities
- Environmental Science
- Appalachian and Ohio River Studies
- Women’s Center
- Center for Excellence and the Library

The Team members felt that the list of ideas included some that are excellent and others not practical. The suggestions were felt to be limited and it was recognized that considerably more attention would be necessary to address this topic. The discussion demonstrated mixed and strong feelings about possible Centers of Excellence for SSU. From one perspective, members expressed the importance of focusing upon an already established, high quality program that is specifically needed for SSU’s particular mission – such as Teacher Preparation. Others expressed the need to respond to the Chancellor’s stated objective for higher education to serve as impetus for economic stimulation. Some felt that a way to tap into this statewide objective would be through a concerted focus on new technologies such as SSU’s game design program or other high-tech area. Consensus was reached that the importance of this issue was of such magnitude that it requires the expansion of this debate University-wide for more thoughtful exploration and focused market/programmatic analyses.

**Other Issues:**

- The Department of Teacher Education underwent a National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation review in November 2008. The Team felt that the results of this review should part of considerations during any campus-wide conversation regarding Centers of Excellence. A copy of the Board of Examiners Report can be obtained from the Department of Teacher Education.
- A suggestion was made that future meetings of this group include time to study continuous improvement concepts for the eventual identification of possible formats and systems that could be adopted for a structured approach to institutional assessment.