September 14, 2012

Charge to the Student Success and Academic Excellence Task Force

The university has developed significantly over the last 25 years, enhancing its educational, research, and community service programs. The recent and dramatic reduction in financial support from the state creates a new set of challenges and opportunities for the university. The purpose of the strategic planning process is to consider how we can build upon our current strengths, seize emerging opportunities, and meet our challenges. In doing this, we will continue our development as a leading public research university and accomplish our educational, research, and community service missions.

The planning process will rely heavily on the work of a steering committee and five task forces with their associated working groups. Each of the five task forces and their associated working groups will be responsible for a specific area. The five areas are: Student Success and Academic Excellence, Research and Creative Endeavors, Community Engagement, Diversity, and Internationalization.

The Steering Committee will be responsible for the overall planning process, including the preparation of the final version of the plan. The Steering Committee will be responsible for integrating the recommendations of the task forces, creating an integrated financial plan to address the university’s financial challenges, prioritizing recommended initiatives, and considering ways to fund prioritized initiatives.

Each task force will be responsible for identifying goals and initiatives we should undertake in the referenced area, determining the resource requirements of the goals and initiatives, and setting priorities among the recommended goals and initiatives.

For the Student Success and Academic Excellence task force, we would like you to consider the following questions as well as others that may arise during your deliberations:
1. One measure of student success is graduation rates. We have received national attention for having the largest increase in graduation rates in the country and for reducing achievement gaps. Do we want to continue our successful work while carefully considering initiatives that would further increase graduation rates? Are there specific subgroups of students which require specific initiatives? Are there pedagogical or technological innovations we should consider to enhance academic success?

2. SDSU continues to be recognized for its high impact practices (study abroad, service/civic learning, research, mentoring, and internships). Given our existing initiatives and the data provided, evaluate the state of these initiatives. How should we build on, or develop, these initiatives? Are there initiatives we should consider that would increase student participation in high impact practices, particularly student groups who are participating at lower rates?

3. SDSU is increasingly a school of choice for high achieving students. As the number of high achieving students at the university increases, what initiatives, if any, should the university pursue to ensure its programs are sufficient to address the needs and aspirations of high achieving students? Are there structures we need to put in place to support an increasing number of high achieving applicants, including those in our local service area?

4. There is substantial interest in our faculty and staff in pedagogical innovation and the use of developing educational technologies. How should we conceptualize the role of on-line education and educational software in our educational programs? Given these perspectives, should we develop or alter our current initiatives in supporting educational technologies?

5. SDSU, like many college campuses, has faced significant challenges regarding alcohol and substance abuse within our student population. Given the existing initiatives and the data provided, are there additional and/or different initiatives we should explore to reduce student alcohol and substance abuse on campus?

6. Given our continuing economic challenges, many members of our community are focused on preparing students for post-graduate opportunities in the workforce or in graduate and professional education. Can we undertake additional and/or different initiatives to better prepare students for post-graduate opportunities? Can we integrate these initiatives with high impact practices to enhance our students’ post-graduate opportunities?

Task force reports are due to the Steering Committee no later than February 1st. Reports should be between 1 and 5 pages and should include general information about the area of the task force, identified goals (if relevant), and recommended initiatives. The resource requirements of all recommended initiatives should also be included. Relevant background information and the detailed rationale for recommended initiatives should be included in appendices. The final task force report will integrate the task force recommendations and integrated financial plans as described above.
To facilitate the engagement of the campus community, the Steering Committee and each task force should hold an open forum to solicit comments and opinions from the university community. Members of the community should also be invited to communicate suggestions, in writing, to the committee and task force chairs. All written reports and recommendations should be presented in draft form on the strategic planning process website, and members of the community should be invited to comment prior to the completion of any report.

Thank you for your contributions to the planning process. The planning process represents an important opportunity to reflect on the present state of the university and to consider how we can make choices--identifying goals and planning initiatives--that will help us meet our challenges, seize opportunities, and fulfill our mission.

With best regards,

Elliot Hirshman
President

William F. Eadie, Ph.D.
Professor

Rob O’Keefe
President, Associated Students