



Columbus State Community College
October 7, 2011 Retreat – Planning Session
Executive Summary

Background:

In its annual fall retreat on October 7, 2011, Columbus State trustees and senior leaders met in the morning to discuss the College's strategic vision. Participants first considered a strategic planning framework designed to engage key stakeholders in the development and implementation of Columbus State's vision and strategic priorities, and then engaged in discussions regarding these key influencers of the institution's success in the coming years.

Goals & Concerns:

When asked to identify what most excites them about Columbus State's future, participants expressed a strong desire to contribute to and participate in students' success and achievement as they prepare for and engage in their lives and careers. They also described the historic opportunities before Columbus State to play a leadership role in the success of Central Ohio's economic development efforts, and to become a national model of excellence and in doing so, establish a new paradigm for performance and contribution by community colleges.

The Columbus State Board and senior staff are clearly energized by the College's leadership, students and opportunities. They are eager to help the College realize its potential, despite barriers that may stand in the way such as political and other external factors, capacity and resource challenges, and ensuring a sense of urgency and the long-term will to succeed despite the real challenges faced by Columbus State and its students. The group discussed the importance of maintaining "double-vision," i.e., ensuring the advancement of the College's long-term strategic priorities while at the same time managing near-term priorities successfully.

The Current State:

President Dr. David Harrison presented the following current state analysis of the College and its environment, which was drawn from wide-ranging discussions and communications with key stakeholders including Columbus State faculty, administrators, staff and students as well as local educators across the spectrum (K-12 through higher education), employers, community leaders, and members of the central Ohio business and professional communities:

Strengths:

- *Critical mass; the size and scope to do big things*
- *Supportive, cohesive Board of Trustees*
- *Solid financial position*
- *Strategic campus locations downtown and in Delaware; regional reach with Delaware Campus and regional learning centers*
- *Statewide leader in online learning*
- *Engaged community stakeholders and community leaders who understand and value higher education*
- *Central Ohio is growing relative to the state*



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- *Quality matters to faculty and staff; people care about what they're doing and want to do a good job*
- *Columbus State is needed now more than ever*

Weaknesses:

- *Focus has been internal*
- *No cohesive strategic plan or academic plan*
- *Brand identity not prominent; people know of us, but they don't know about us*
- *Data and management information has room to improve*
- *Infrastructure (facilities, technology, human resources) is constrained*
- *Regional learning centers do not all represent the college well*
- *Systems and processes are not aligned with a "completion agenda," built for short-term gains*
- *Completion rates lag; in the earliest stages of moving to a "culture of completion"*
- *Columbus State is not top-of-mind among regional leaders*

Opportunities:

- *Partnerships could lead to dramatic expansion of access to the bachelor's degree, improved college readiness, a powerful regional workforce network, creative facilities arrangements, new funding streams, and more*
- *Strategically positioned within the region's portfolio of colleges and universities; open access institution in a college town; other institutions need our students*
- *Can become the region's recognized leader in workforce development – addressing the 'skills gap'*
- *Location in state capital could be advantageous*
- *Community colleges are a national priority*
- *Community will appear to exist to address the region's big issues (college readiness, workforce development); many are looking to Columbus State for leadership*
- *Columbus is a philanthropic town*
- *Energy, enthusiasm, and a little anxiety exist among faculty and staff*
- *Financial reserves can be used strategically*
- *Ohio has a large population of adults with some college but no degree*
- *We have the opportunity to change the equation in college readiness*

Threats:

- *Costs will rise, so revenues must rise, over time*
- *State funding will remain flat or decrease*
- *Tuition must remain affordable*
 - *We have realized our cheapest growth*
 - *Most students are not college-ready*
- *As the need to increase completion mounts, will this threaten our access mission?*
- *Strategies of partners could change*
- *Federal financial aid provides a majority of tuition revenue*
- *Fewer high school graduates are in the pipeline*
- *Politics*
- *Enrollment contraction is a possibility*



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As participants reflected and commented upon Dr. Harrison’s analysis, additional factors, observations and questions included:

- *The unprecedented state of the economy*
- *The effect of changing high school demographics, which will create opportunities for Columbus State, including potential acquisitions*
- *The political and other impact of for-profit institutions*
- *The need to define the right online opportunities*
- *The need to be organized for and agile in evaluating and acting on opportunities and partnerships*
- *The opportunities presented by the relative affluence & education level of the region*
- *The need to ensure Columbus State’s economic security*
- *Both the region’s and Columbus State’s diversity as a strength and an opportunity*
- *The blurring of lines between “college-ready” and “work-ready”*

Dr. Harrison concluded his remarks by outlining a vision for Columbus State via an article that might appear in The Columbus Dispatch in 2021 describing the College as “the most important institution in Central Ohio.” Based on this exciting vision of Columbus State’s future, trustees and staff were asked to describe the College from the perspective of its students and other key stakeholders in 2021:

Students will say that:

- Columbus State was the front door to my future
- Columbus State is essential
- I highly regard Columbus State faculty & staff
- Columbus State provided a transformational experience

Employers will say that:

- Columbus State is our region’s HR department
- Columbus State is our source for capable, trained workforce
- Columbus State is a key knowledge resource and exchange
- Columbus State trains exceptional, qualified students

Columbus State faculty & staff will say that:

- Columbus State is a great place to work, and I plan to continue to grow there professionally
- Columbus State is a destination employer
- I can make a difference every day at Columbus State
- I value Columbus State for its mission and focus, its culture, its commitment to employees and the many benefits that I realize from working there

Feeder schools will say that:

- We want our graduates to earn a degree at Columbus State
- Columbus State is our partner
- Columbus State understands our students and serves them well
- Based on quality, outcomes and cost, Columbus State is the top choice for our graduates



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Colleges & universities will say that:

- Columbus State graduates are our best students
- Columbus State is our partner, and our top source for talented and prepared students

Communities where Columbus State operates will say that::

- Columbus State is the most important institution in the region, and is always part of the solution
- Columbus State was essential in the transformation of the community
- Columbus State is a great partner and neighbor
- “The miracle on Spring/Cornerstone”

To achieve this bold vision and deliver the value to stakeholders that was described here, Dr. Harrison outlined the following draft strategic priorities, which will continue to be developed as the strategic planning process continues:

- 1. Student Success and Attainment**
- 2. Access and College Readiness**
- 3. Workforce Development and Economic Impact**

Closing Thoughts -- Commitments to Support Emerging Vision:

As the session came to a close, Columbus State’s Board of Trustees and leadership team reflected on the morning’s discussion. The group agreed that achievement of this bold new vision of Columbus State’s future requires:

- Effective communication
- Clarification of the strategic priorities and plans for implementation
- Support of Dr. Harrison’s leadership role in central Ohio
- Engagement of the right talent, and supporting them as they focus and adapt to the new vision
- Engagement of key stakeholders
- Managing well while we work toward achievement of the new vision
- A Board that pushes the advance, and is focused on the big picture rather than the day-to-day
- Embracing change
- Keeping students are at the heart of what we do
- Rising to the challenge, despite the number of variables and degree of difficulty