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For benchmark measures for each of these strategic plan priorities, more details on this plan and for continuing opportunities to provide feedback on how this plan should evolve, please go online to www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan
vision
Columbus State University strives to be a first choice institution for discerning students who seek challenging programs, engaged faculty, and a vibrant, globally connected campus culture.

mission
We empower people to contribute to the advancement of our local and global communities through an emphasis on excellence in teaching and research, life-long learning, cultural enrichment, public-private partnerships, and service to others.

priorities
• Attract a higher percentage of students with the motivation and preparation to complete a degree.
• Employ more creative instructional methods to meet the needs of diverse students (nontraditional, traditional, first generation, international, honors, graduates).
• Increase student academic and social engagement and sense of belonging.
• Sustain the university’s growth by focusing resources in areas with strong potential based on emerging opportunities.
• Improve faculty/staff retention, job satisfaction, and productivity.
• Improve stewardship through leadership in sustainability programs, the efficient use of resources, and external partnerships.
Colleagues, Students and Friends,

Thanks to the work of some very talented and engaged faculty and staff, I’m pleased to present a new comprehensive strategic plan that will inspire and direct us for the next few years.

This plan embraces the foundation for greatness that you have helped us to achieve here at Columbus State University. I believe this plan – and the sentiments and actions behind it – will allow us to continue our emergence as a university that is nationally recognized for teaching, envied for its community partnerships, respected for its dedication to quality, and lauded for its commitment to students.

Our new vision is for Columbus State University to be a first choice institution for discerning students. The pursuit of this vision will reverberate throughout campus and guide us toward excellence in all the varied areas the university touches.

I invite you to read through this document so you can see for yourself why so many people are excited about Columbus State University.

Thank you for your contributions and commitment.

Sincerely,

Timothy S. Mescon, Ph.D.
President
Friends,

It is with great pleasure that we present the Columbus State University Strategic Plan for 2013-18. This plan not only represents months of intensive work by the commission membership, it reflects a collective effort of the CSU community. We owe a debt of gratitude to the hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and community members who participated in the planning process, attended more than 20 different open forums and responded to us online or in person. We are especially grateful to the members of the Strategic Planning Commission who selflessly gave of their time and expertise.

The strategic planning process has been dynamic, affirming, and, at times, challenging. Throughout the process, the core of every decision focused on one primary goal: student success. The strategic priorities highlighted in this plan transcend disciplinary and organizational boundaries. These priorities confirm the core values of this university, its rich academic experience, and its exceptional faculty and staff. We believe this plan illustrates the distinct character of Columbus State and positions us to fulfill our mission and achieve our vision.

We expect the 2013-18 Strategic Plan will define and articulate our direction over the next five years. We hope the process of developing this plan sets the stage for ongoing discussions about the implementation of these ideas and the shape of our future. Our historic success as a university depends on the continued guidance and inclusion of all stakeholders.

As we continue our emphasis on becoming a “First Choice” institution, we encourage you to join us in embracing the exciting opportunities that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Tom Hackett, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Gina Sheeks, Ph.D.
Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
VISION:
“Columbus State University strives to be a first choice institution for discerning students who seek challenging programs, engaged faculty, and a vibrant, globally connected campus culture.”

EXPLANATION OF THE 2013 VISION STATEMENT:

Columbus State University (“CSU”) has improved its reputation for undergraduate education in the last few decades, as evidenced by its recent recognition in the 2013 U.S. News & World Report rankings as one of the top 50 public regional universities in the South. Our long-term goal is to continue to make improvements and become a “first choice” institution that attracts academically-engaged students who are looking for challenging programs and a vibrant campus culture. We believe that the largest contributors to CSU’s improved reputation have been its focus on teaching excellence, experiential learning, cultural enrichment opportunities, and public-private partnerships. This new vision is designed to move CSU to the next level by focusing on its strengths and making improvements in key success areas in order to create an educational experience that is exceptional in its value when compared to other institutions. Student success is an important part of this strategic vision. Faculty and student engagement have a significant impact on student success, so they are key to this plan. Faculty engagement includes activities that impact research and creative inquiry, faculty/student interaction, internal/external collaboration, and service activities.

Becoming a “first choice” institution requires developing a vibrant, globally connected campus culture. Student engagement not only increases student success, but it is also a necessary ingredient to a vibrant campus culture. Student engagement includes student participation in research and creative projects, cultural enrichment activities, living/learning communities, service projects and activities, and professional and social organizations and activities. Maintaining a vibrant campus culture also requires a focus on in-demand and/or cutting edge degree programs (such as those in the STEM disciplines, healthcare, education, and business). Additionally, it is important that graduates understand the impact that organizations have on the external environment since environmental sustainability is not just a local issue – it is also a pressing global issue. It is clear that in today’s environment successful graduates will need exposure to global issues such as an appreciation of different cultures. The rapid increase in the global mobility of students, services, and trade necessitates a continued focus on international education and study abroad programs. Students should be involved and engaged not only with the local campus community, but also with our international community.
MISSION:
“We empower people to contribute to the advancement of our local and global communities through an emphasis on excellence in teaching and research, life-long learning, cultural enrichment, public-private partnerships, and service to others.”

EXPLANATION OF THE 2013 MISSION STATEMENT:

Consistent with the University System of Georgia’s mission, CSU’s primary mission is to empower its stakeholders to make a contribution to society. The university’s stakeholders include its faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our local and global communities. Academic excellence has always been an important part of CSU’s mission. It includes a focus on teaching excellence, research and creative inquiry, and faculty and student engagement. In addition to academic excellence, we will continue to focus on skills that encourage life-long learning, including communication (written and oral), critical problem-solving, and critical thinking. Clearly, CSU’s key differentiating strengths are its public-private partnerships and its experiential and cultural enrichment opportunities, which include its global learning communities, cultural enrichment programs and activities, service learning activities, study abroad and undergraduate research opportunities. We will continue to focus and build on these strengths.

OUR SIX CORE VALUES REMAIN AND THEY ARE AS FollowS:

1. EXCELLENCE: Commitment to best practices in teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, student engagement, cultural enrichment and campus environment.
2. ENGAGEMENT: Active civil participation by students, faculty and staff in the university experience.
3. CREATIVITY: The pursuit of distinction through inquiry and innovation, challenging convention and focusing on solutions.
4. SERVANT LEADERSHIP: Effective, ethical leadership through empowerment and service.
5. INCLUSION: Fostering and promoting a campus that embraces diverse people, ideas, views, and practices.
6. SUSTAINABILITY: Commitment to behaviors that recognize and respect our environmental context.
MOTIVATED
**STRATEGIC FOCUS #1:**

*Becoming a “First Choice” Institution*

**Priority #1:**
Attract a higher percentage of students with the motivation and preparation to complete a degree.

**GOAL #1:**
Improve CSU’s name recognition, academic reputation, and ranking.

**Recommended strategies:**
- Market our value, location, creative instruction, and student engagement opportunities in the large population areas in Georgia and the Southeast.
- Sustain a diverse student body.
- Increase funding and support for faculty and student research and creative endeavors that bring regional, national, and international attention to CSU.
- Ensure consistency in program admission and quality standards across all CSU degree programs.
- Raise entering test scores to match aspirant schools.

**GOAL #2:**
Increase the number of student scholars.

**Recommended strategies:**
- Build on-campus Honors housing and increase Honors programming and scholarships.
- Recruit more students who can maintain HOPE eligibility.
- Introduce more dual enrollment programs (high school, bachelor’s/master’s dual enrollment, etc.).
- Increase international student enrollment.
- Raise scholarship funding to achieve a distribution of scholarship funds based on program demand (% of students) and strategic plan emphasis.

**GOAL #3:**
Continue to offer a “best value” educational experience.

**Recommended strategies:**
- Continually evaluate competitiveness in our tuition and fee structure compared to peer institutions.
- Increase financial aid opportunities, especially on-campus work/study opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Increase the value of degrees by adding resources and support for graduates leaving the university and entering the job market or applying to graduate schools.

*Benchmark measures related to Strategic Focus #1, Priority #1 are: #1-8, 16 (online at www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan)*
STRATEGIC FOCUS #1: Becoming a “First Choice” Institution

Priority #2: Employ more creative instructional methods to meet the needs of diverse students (nontraditional, traditional, first generation, international, honors, graduates).

GOAL #1: Improve the quality of instruction through improvements in classrooms, labs, professional development, instructional quality and instructional technology.

Recommended strategies:
- More funding for targeted instructional facility improvements throughout the main campus including labs (based on the Sasaki master plan).
- Increase professional development in alternative pedagogical approaches that address the needs of millennial learners.
- Provide highly trained supplemental instruction for remedial and core courses with high percentages of non-productive grades.
- Provide “best-in-class” technology and information-based services to meet the increased needs for RPG, instruction, research, and administrative services.

GOAL #2: Improve flexibility in course design and resources for all students.

Recommended strategies:
- Improved “after-hours” and online services on the main campus for CSU’s large number of nontraditional students.
- Employ more creative scheduling (such as an 8-week “half-semester” model) and innovative course delivery methods (such as hybrid courses).
- Publish a two-year schedule of courses and review each major to identify scheduling barriers to degree completion.

Benchmark measures related to Strategic Focus #1, Priority #2 are #1, 8-9, 11 (online at www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan)
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STRATEGIC FOCUS #1: Becoming a “First Choice” Institution

Priority #3: Increase student academic and social engagement and sense of belonging

GOAL #1: Promote student participation in CSU’s global, academic, and experiential learning programs.

Recommended strategies:
• Increase the enrollment in study abroad programs and International Learning Communities.
• Increase student participation in internships, co-ops, research and creative endeavors, and service learning programs.
• Improve the integration and impact of the First Year Learning Experience by cultivating learning communities and creating seminars that target distinct sub-populations such as military, adult re-entry, honors, etc.

GOAL #2: Cultivate student participation in CSU’s cultural and social activities.

Recommended strategies:
• Increase the number of living/learning communities.
• In keeping with the Sasaki master plan, attain funding to enhance the functionality, usability, and the “coolness” factor of the main campus to attract and engage students in campus life.
• Increase student engagement through diverse cultural and social activities (Greek life, professional/social organizations, sports, etc.).
• Encourage community investments that support and encourage student life immediately surrounding the main campus.
• Cultivate one cohesive community between CSU’s two campuses.

GOAL #3: Focus more on student satisfaction and well-being.

Recommended strategies:
• Increase staff training in key service areas to cultivate a “culture of customer service.”
• Promote fitness activities and healthy lifestyles (e.g., healthy food options, student recreation center, intramural clubs, bike trails, etc.).
• Increase the number/percentage of full-time faculty teaching in the core while decreasing reliance on adjuncts at all levels.
• Train and evaluate faculty on student advising methods.
• Maintain high quality of safety and security on CSU’s campuses.

Benchmark measures related to Strategic Focus #1, Priority #3 are #1, 7-14 (online at www.ColumbusState.edu/Strategic Plan)
Priority #1:
Sustain the University’s growth by focusing resources in areas with strong potential based on emerging opportunities.

Recommended strategies:

- Increase the relevance, efficiency, and value of degree programs through interdisciplinary collaboration and credentialing options (e.g., minors, certificates, endorsements).
- Provide support to sustain innovative and grant-funded programs that prove successful.
- Explore programs that support growth areas:
  - Increase funding, resources, and support for graduate programs and for faculty who teach graduate courses.
  - Maximize faculty expertise and commitment through increased funding for new endowed positions in growth areas.
  - Increase funding for student scholarships in growth areas.

Benchmark measures related to Strategic Focus #2, Priority #1 are #1, 3,7,15-16 (online at www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan)
Priority #2: 
Improve faculty/staff retention, job satisfaction, and productivity.

Recommended strategies:
• Embrace and expand opportunities for broad-based shared governance through implementation of the policy proposed by the Shared Governance Task Force.
• Achieve competitive salaries for faculty and staff to retain a strong, diverse and versatile workforce.
• Recognize faculty/staff performance and achievements, and develop a program to support faculty applications for state, regional and national awards.
• Develop a policy to return a share of indirect grant funds to faculty.
• Balance instructional, service, and research loads to enhance faculty productivity.
STRATEGIC FOCUS #2:  
Driving Sustainable Growth

Priority #3: 
Improve stewardship through leadership in sustainability programs, the efficient use of resources, and external partnerships.

Recommended strategies:

- Develop an infrastructure to coordinate and implement a sustainability master plan.
- Encourage the use of mass transit or alternative commute options (for students, faculty, and staff).
- Integrate sustainability in the curriculum.
- Develop an incentive program to reward individuals for new ideas to increase resource efficiencies within the University.
- Promote faculty research and expertise that builds relationships within the University’s local, regional, national and global communities.
- Expand alumni engagement.
- Encourage public/private partnerships and outreach programs that focus on mutually beneficial exchanges.

Benchmark measures related to Strategic Focus #2, Priority #3 are #1,3,9,14,17-19 (online at www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan)
ENGAGEMENT
Developing CSU’s New Five-Year Strategic Plan (2013-18):

A Strategic Planning Commission was formed in the Spring of 2012 to review the University’s current plan and develop a five-year plan to be implemented beginning FY 2013-14. The Commission reviewed the university’s current plan and researched the current environment by analyzing data from several internal and external sources. The committee then developed a SWOT analysis and sought input for the plan via more than 20 focus groups and surveys distributed to faculty, staff, alumni, and students. A strategic planning website offered additional opportunities for faculty and staff input.

Based on the research conducted by the commission, CSU’s primary strengths were determined to be its location, its comparative value, its focus on teaching excellence, experiential learning opportunities (such as the Study Abroad, Servant Leadership, and UTeach programs), cultural enrichment opportunities (to include two campuses and several outreach centers), and public-private partnerships (“town-gown” relations). CSU’s important weaknesses identified by the SWOT analysis included low student retention/graduation rates and a lack of on-campus student engagement. The SWOT analysis also identified several opportunities and potential threats in the immediate environment, to include the growth in the use of technology in higher education, which has opened up new instructional formats (online courses) and has increased competition in the local area resulting in more educational options for students. With the decline in federal and state funding and the concurrent rise in college tuition in the last decade, the cost of higher education has become a major concern of the general population. It is clear that one of the main threats to higher education in the United States is the decline in its perceived value. To sustain organizational growth, the University will need to communicate its value in comparison to other universities across the country. Student success is a key factor in increasing the perceived value of an educational experience. Making improvements in the area of student success will not be easy and will require a strategic focus, substantial investments, and a significant effort.

Improving student success alone is not sufficient to move CSU forward. Moving the university forward also will require a focus on organizational stewardship and investments in areas that capitalize on emerging opportunities. Of course, our employees are key to the success of this plan, so we need to continue to focus on issues that impact faculty and staff satisfaction and retention. Additionally, successful stewardship strategies should include investments in sustainability programs that can reduce the University’s long-term operating costs and lessen its impact on the environment.

The new strategic plan presents a two-pronged approach to accomplishing the university’s vision. The first strategic direction focuses on improving student success by attracting more student scholars, engaging students both academically and socially, employing creative instruction, and fostering student well-being. This strategic focus confronts CSU’s primary weaknesses, which threaten the core mission of the university. It is imperative to address student success first since it will have the biggest impact on the university’s long-term vitality. The second strategic direction focuses on sustaining the university’s growth by enhancing in-demand and innovative programs, improving faculty/staff retention, and advancing organizational stewardship. The second strategic focus builds upon CSU’s strengths to enable the university to capitalize on new opportunities.

This plan incorporates goals and strategies recommended by the university’s Facilities Planning Committee (and the Sasaki master plan) and the University System of Georgia’s “Complete College Georgia” (CCG) initiative. Under each of the two strategic foci we have rank-ordered strategic priorities according to their importance to accomplishing the university’s five-year vision. For assessment purposes, benchmark measures were developed for the strategies contained in this plan and are listed online at www.ColumbusState.edu/StrategicPlan.