

# USC LANCASTER BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE

## A. Executive Summary

### 1. The Planning Process at USC Lancaster

In one form or another, it has been said about strategic planning that the process is more important than the plan itself. That statement characterizes several key facets of strategic planning. First, strategic planning deals with the long-term. It is not operational planning. Second, strategic planning addresses the very fundamentals of an organization – what is our *true* mission, what beliefs under-gird our approach to fulfilling that mission, what is our vision of the future – where do we want to be 5 or 10 years from today, and, what is the best strategy for achieving that vision? Third, strategic planning is fact-based. Fourth, it addresses the changing environment in which we live and operate. Finally, strategic planning, when done correctly, drives the operational planning. If strategic goals are based upon relevant data, if a broad spectrum of leaders help formulate the plan, and, if the plan is communicated for all to understand, then achievement of goals is much more probable.

To fully appreciate the strategic goals and initiatives of USC Lancaster, a brief recap of our planning process is in order. Our strategic planning methodology is modeled after a process espoused by the American Management Association. A multi-disciplinary team was established to coordinate efforts – the USCL Strategic Planning Committee. Each committee member received a copy of *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, by John M. Bryson, Copyright © 2004, John Wiley and Sons, Inc. The committee devoted its early meetings to review and discussion of the process and examples provided in the “Bryson Book.”

Following initial training and orientation in planning methodology, our committee then reviewed the mission statement and mandates authorized for USCL by the USC Board of Trustees and approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). That lengthy mission statement was summarized into a single sentence. The condensed mission statement neither changes nor detracts from the formal, legal mission. The single-sentence mission statement is one which can be easily and widely communicated.

The committee proceeded to write a vision statement that incorporates ideas about our future. In reviewing extant materials about USCL, the committee found it note-worthy that a statement of values had never been established for the campus. Because a statement of values is a key ingredient in any strategic plan, the committee undertook drafting one.

Next, the committee began formulating plans to gather data from key customers and stakeholders of USCL. Reaching beyond the traditional surveying of faculty, staff, students and alumni, the committee decided to also survey the Lancaster business community, benefactors, the Lancaster County School District, Lancaster city and county officials – both elected and appointed, the Lancaster County Commission for Higher Education, The Friends of Medford Library, the Board of Directors of the Educational Foundation of USCL, incoming freshman and parents of incoming freshman.

## 2. Statement of Alignment

Teams were created among the committee to draft the various surveys. Survey topics and questions were developed that would afford respondents an opportunity to tell us what USCL is doing right, what we could do better, what new services and programs they would like to see offered at USCL and, what their vision is of our future.

Trend analysis was another key step in our planning process. Data was gathered about academic and administrative programs so internal trends could be analyzed. External trends were also gathered and analyzed – political, economic, social, technological and, trends in higher education.

After all information had been gathered, analyzed and summarized, a two day planning workshop was held in October 2007. Representatives from all USCL academic and programmatic areas participated. A professional consultant from the University of Louisville, Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning, served as meeting facilitator.

Day one of the workshop was devoted to committee presentations about survey data and analyses. Breakout sessions were held after each presentation and workshop participants discussed strengths and weaknesses identified from responses of each particular stakeholder group. Participants also reviewed, discussed and modified as needed the mission, vision and values statements, reaching a consensus on each.

Day two of the workshop consisted of program managers from across the campus making presentations about trends in their areas of responsibility. This included admissions and enrollment, employment, financial aid, technology, TRIO, budget, academic, distance education, library, public information, recruitment, and public service. External trends information was also presented to workshop participants. These included political, economic, social, technological, and, trends in higher education.

From all the information presented and discussed over the two days, participants then documented USCL's internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats, creating the SWOT matrix. Internal strengths and weaknesses were matched against external opportunities and threats to complete the SWOT analysis. From that discussion, participants then drafted preliminary strategic goals and objectives (initiatives).

A second, one-day workshop followed a month later with more participants. The Lancaster County Commission for Higher Education and representatives of the board of directors of the Educational Foundation of USCL were the focal audience for this next step in planning. Condensed presentations about survey data and internal and external trends were provided to these two organizations. The SWOT matrix and the preliminary goals and objectives developed in prior workshops were reviewed and discussed. Both the Lancaster County Commission for Higher Education and the Educational Foundation of USCL endorsed and embraced the draft goals and initiatives, the mission, vision and values statements. The planning committee then proceeded with writing the final draft of goals, developing action plans and determining performance indicators.

USCL's Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012 focuses on the higher education needs of the community. The mission, values, vision, and goals set forth in this plan were formulated from data gathered from stakeholders of the university's success – students, businesses, government leaders, local schools, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and university friends. USCL is an integral part of the state's flagship university. As such, USCL's strategic goals support the goals of the greater university. Moreover, the strategic plan reflects the direction of the Lancaster County Commission for Higher Education and the Educational Foundation of USCL. Those three entities – the University, the Commission and, the Foundation work in unison to provide Lancaster and surrounding counties with the finest state-assisted secondary education available in the area.

USCL's strategic plan incorporates the vision for higher education established by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, to wit, "Higher education will be recognized as the engine for realizing South Carolina's ambitions for human and economic development so that all citizens can take advantage of the opportunities that the 21st century has to offer."

In its vision for higher education in South Carolina, the CHE further identified "higher purposes" which include:

- Creating a well-educated citizenry;
- Raising the standard of living of South Carolinians;
- Improving the quality of life;
- Meeting changing work force needs;
- Creating economic development
- Positioning the state to be competitive in a global economy; and,
- Fashioning a new generation *of public sector and private sector leaders.*

USC Lancaster's strategic plan is philosophically aligned with the three major goals identified by the CHE:

- Expand Educational Opportunities for South Carolina Citizens
- Invest in Research for Economic Development & a Better Quality of Life
- Increase Cooperation and Collaboration for Efficiency and Quality

### 3. Vision Statement – University of South Carolina Lancaster

USC Lancaster aspires to be a leader among USC's regional campuses as a comprehensive learning center offering equal access to high-quality university programs and services. USC Lancaster must be a dynamic, forward-looking and proactive institution of higher learning that relates productively to its community and to the University of South Carolina. USC Lancaster seeks to continuously enhance its intellectual environment and expand access to its academic programs.

#### A. Superior Education

The focus at USC Lancaster is delivery of superior education at an exceptional value. To that end, USC Lancaster will serve as the standard bearer for the regional campuses of the University of South Carolina. By all measures of efficiency and effectiveness, USC Lancaster will excel in the quality of academic programs that lead to associate and baccalaureate degrees. The USCL faculty will be comprised of scholars dedicated to teaching. They will employ instructional methods calculated to engage and challenge students. Faculty will be dedicated to aiding students in achieving their greatest academic potential. In pursuit of continued scholarship, faculty will undertake research, present findings, and publish works in their chosen fields of study. USC Lancaster will seek and maintain accreditation of all academic programs.

#### B. State of the Art Resources

USC Lancaster will operate with state-of-the art resources. In order to amplify the learning environment, classrooms will be designed and equipped for instructional efficiency and comfort. Laboratories will be equipped with technologies that will capitalize on innovation, functionality and safety. Recognizing that libraries are the gateway to the sum of human knowledge, USC Lancaster will provide students and the community with a library that is conducive to reading, research, discovery, and learning. Academic resources and research materials will be readily available through multiple media and from a variety of sources. Students will be trained to ensure they are able to access needed resources. Through its T. J. Blumer Catawba Research Collection, USCL's Medford Library will be the United States' preeminent source of information about Catawba Indian history and culture.

#### B. Strategic Leader in Partnership with our Community

USC Lancaster will provide strategic leadership in setting the direction for higher education in its six-county service region. As USC Lancaster approaches its golden anniversary, it does so with realization that it has not yet reached its full potential. Moreover, USCL recognizes that economic transformation in its service region translates into increased demand for more diversified degree programs. By actively engaging customers and stakeholders, USC Lancaster will partner with community leaders and organizations in analyzing 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and opportunities, both for the university and the community as a whole. Working in cooperation with the Lancaster County Commission on Higher Education and the Educational Foundation of the University of South Carolina Lancaster, the university's planning will focus on excellence in higher education, strong financial

management, and continued growth in service to the region, service to USC and service the state of South Carolina. USC Lancaster will offer health and wellness programs, cultural events and university facilities for the betterment of and enjoyment by students and citizens. In partnership with the Educational Foundation, USCL will endow faculty chairs, establish a multi-million dollar general endowment fund, expand the physical plant and intensify campus beautification programs. In cooperation with the Lancaster County Commission on Higher Education, USCL will ensure cost-effective operations and maintenance of the physical plant to maximize energy conservation.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” -- Proverbs 29:18

#### 4. Mission

USCL is not advocating any change in mission. However, our planning committee reviewed the mission statement and mandates authorized for USCL by the USC Board of Trustees and approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). That lengthy mission statement was summarized by the committee into a single sentence. This condensed mission statement neither changes nor detracts from the formal legal mission. Rather, it is one which can be easily and widely communicated.

***The mission of USC Lancaster is to provide an accessible and affordable student-centered educational opportunity and to enrich our regional community through a strong commitment to public service.***

The full text of the USCL mission statement may be accessed at <http://usclancaster.sc.edu/mission.htm>

## 5. Statement of Values

The principles by which an organization conducts its business must not be left to assumption or mere conjecture. Every organization must decide what it values most in pursuit of its mission. Further, it must share those values with the people it serves so all understand and appreciate the significance of those principles. The Statement of Values which follows encapsulates the fundamental principles which guide USCL faculty, administration, staff and students.

***As an integral part of the state's flagship university, USC Lancaster exemplifies and embodies the core beliefs of the University of South Carolina. These principles are an expression of our values and guide the daily activities of the USC Lancaster campus community:***

- *The pursuit of knowledge is a life-long endeavor;*
- *To be admitted as a student to USC Lancaster is a privilege and an opportunity;*
- *To graduate from USC Lancaster is to commence service to future generations;*
- *USC Lancaster faculty and staff maintain an uncompromising commitment to excellence and integrity;*
- *USC Lancaster faculty are committed to teaching excellence and scholarly activity, which exemplify the core values of the University;*
- *USC Lancaster faculty and staff are dedicated to facilitating student success;*
- *USC Lancaster faculty and staff are dedicated to providing public service; and,*
- *A well educated citizenry is vital to economic and community well-being.*

“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, patient with the old, sympathetic with the striving, tolerant with the weak and strong, because someday in life you will have been all of these.”

-- George Washington Carver

## 6. Goals

Goal 1 (new): Expand the number of degree programs in order to meet student expectations and community needs.

Goal 2 (new): Provide a superior educational experience that prepares USCL graduates for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Goal 3 (new): Improve USCL's physical plant in order to sustain enrollment growth, expand public services and sustain the recruitment and retention of high-caliber faculty.

Goal 4 (new): Strengthen the financial condition, efficiency and operations of USCL.

*"As our case is new, we must think and act anew."* – A. Lincoln