



COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

STRATEGIC PLAN



Research reveals interesting findings about the College

No rock has been left unturned in the past few months as the Strategic Planning Committee set out to discover everything they could about the College – how we compare to other institutions; how environmental issues might impact the College’s future; and how different units in the College perceive our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

“The subcommittees have done a fantastic job of encouraging the campus to participate, gathering data and presenting the reports,” said **Jim Deavor**, co-chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Environmental Scan, presented by chairman **David Cohen**, provided information on education trends, economic and demographic forces, technological forces, political and legislative issues, cultural and social issues and global trends.

The comprehensive Environmental Scan allows the College to respond effectively to changes in the world around us.

One finding confirmed that a bachelor’s degree represents a 34 percent increase in annual earnings over a high school diploma.

The scan also revealed that the College, with a rate of only 13 percent minority students and 9 percent minority faculty, is the least racially diverse public college in South Carolina.



FOCUS GROUPS

Co-chairs **Lisa Thomson Ross** and **Marjorie Thomas** explained how their committee, along with the Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment Office, coordinated meetings with 33 focus groups containing 271 participants. Groups included faculty, students, staff, alumni and friends of the College. In addition, 128 stakeholders responded to an online virtual focus group.

The most consistent finding is that the campus and community are concerned with lack of financial resources. Other top priorities are: student issues, marketing/PR/branding, faculty /staff issues and diversity.

“We want to thank everyone who participated and to let them know that their voices have been heard and will continue to be heard as the planning process continues,” said Ross.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

Chairman **Simon Lewis** and his committee shared the results of their charge: to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT Analysis) of the College.

The subcommittee used unit representatives and a web-based system to gather responses from the campus. A total of 4,535 unique entries was recorded with an overall response rate of over 93 percent.

Faculty and staff commented on a wide range of subjects, including strong academic programs, experienced professors, dedicated staff, decades of low faculty salaries, inadequate teaching space, the College’s great location, expanding international connections and a weak endowment, just to name a few.

The subcommittee merged similar entries in each of the four categories into a more manageable set of 71 strengths, 109 weaknesses, 51 opportunities and 24 threats. They then produced a list of the top five themes in each category.

“The SWOT analysis has been a valuable exercise because each unit/department had a great opportunity to discuss what direction their unit should be headed in,” Lewis said. “They can use their own individual analyses to guide their progress.”

HOW DO WE COMPARE?

Though it was tricky to define the College’s competition, chairman **Darryl Phillips** explained that the Competitive Analysis subcommittee combined lists of institutions from the Delaware Study for Faculty Workload, the Council on Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), the Compensation Study and Admissions Overlap to provide 81 peers for comparative purposes.

Some of the many findings include:

- The College has an academically strong admissions profile.
- We offer less merit-based financial assistance to incoming students.
- We rank near the bottom for non-need based gift aid to out-of-state students and offer fewer tuition abatements.
- Our student retention rate is low compared to our peers.
- Part-time faculty use is very high.



Next Steps

- A detailed report of all sub-committee findings will be distributed this summer.
- The Strategic Planning Committee will use the sub-committee reports to begin writing the first draft of the umbrella strategic plan in August.