![University of Richmond — School of Professional & Continuing Studies logo]

2017-22

SPCS STRATEGIC PLAN

Contents

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Background

In 2012, the School of Continuing Studies launched a five-year strategic plan that proposed sweeping changes, first to its name, becoming the School of Professional and Continuing Studies, and then to its undergraduate programs of study. Implementation resulted in updating our Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS) and Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) degrees to become Bachelor of Science in Professional Studies (BSPS) and Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (BALA) degrees. Additional changes stemming from the plan's implementation included eliminating our online emergency management programs, adding graduate programs in nonprofit studies and public history, and winding down our off-campus weekend college programs in Danville and Fredericksburg.

Since that time, significant changes in leadership at both the University and School level have generated renewed interest in and focus on developing strategic plans for stability, sustainability, measured growth, and program and operational refinement. As the University launched its latest strategic planning initiative under the leadership of a new president, SPCS launched its strategic planning initiative under the leadership of a new dean. The SPCS process has followed closely behind the University process, enabling the School's plan to integrate some of the major themes of the University's plan into its own planning. In addition to paralleling the University's process, SPCS has consulted with Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc. (SIR) to collect data and identify areas where internal and external respondents see opportunities for improvement along with models of excellence.

Key research findings included the importance of incorporating the Richmond community into the School's plans, the opportunity to innovate as one of few continuing and professional education (CPE) divisions in top-tier private liberal arts schools, and the significance of the School's relationship with the University as a brand, as a Richmond landmark, as a private institution, and as a partner in community engagement. As the plan coalesced around research findings and feedback from stakeholders, themes emerged that have influenced the process of setting goals and recommending initiatives.

Leadership has generated renewed interest in and focus on developing a strategic plan for stability, sustainability, measured growth, and program and operational refinement.

Introduction

The SPCS Strategic Plan consists of three elements: Strategic Themes, Goals and Initiatives. Part of the planning process also allowed us to assess our mission and values.

The plan and its elements are informed by the School's mission, vision and values, but the mission, vision and values were in turn influenced by the strategic planning process. As a result, the updated mission, vision and values are integrated into the Strategic Plan, but they represent constants that are external to the plan itself and part of the School's culture.

Mission: Why We Do What We Do
We enrich lives and careers for the 21st century.

Vision: What We Seek to Accomplish
SPCS aspires to be an exemplar of continuing education for working professionals and lifelong learners in the Richmond region and a top choice for those seeking transformative learning experiences.

Values: How We Do What We Do
Our values both reflect our culture and guide our interactions. They are guided by an ethos of care that anticipates excellence. Our values include Care, Collaboration, Diversity, Excellence, Innovation, Integrity, Learning and Responsiveness. More than a list of words, our values collectively build and support a culture focused on *transformation, collaboration, communication and diversity*.

We updated our mission, vision and values as part our planning process and integrated key components of each into the Strategic Plan.

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Themes

Four key strategic themes emerged from our research, through ongoing conversations with stakeholders, and by placing the SPCS plan in alignment with the University plan. These themes permeate our goals and provide a framework by which we measure the applicability and success of our initiatives.

Focus
Clarify and strengthen the SPCS programs, identity and brand.

Innovation
Explore, create, and evaluate new educational opportunities for degree programs, professional education and lifelong learning.

Integration
Create strong synergies within SPCS and across the University community.

Community Engagement
Partner intentionally across the greater Richmond community to forge new relationships and to enhance existing ones.

Our key strategic themes permeate our goals and provide a loose framework by which we measure the applicability and success of our initiatives.

Goal 1

Ensure focused, mission-aligned offerings across three student-centered categories:

- **Degree programs**
- **Professional education**
- **Lifelong learning**

SPCS has been serving the needs of nontraditional students for more than 50 years. As globalization, the U.S. economy and technology continue to reshape the job market, we remain committed to offering degree and professional education programs that support adult students in their quests to start, advance or change careers. Moreover, we will continue to foster a love of lifelong learning and promote the value of continuing education through a variety of learning opportunities that are rooted in our areas of expertise and aligned with the needs and learning styles of our target audiences.

Initiatives

- Review degree programs to assure mission-aligned offerings.
- Review professional education programs to assure focus on market specific needs.
- Review non-professional programs/offerings to assure mission-alignment and market interest.
- Establish collaborative advisory councils for each academic and professional education program to ensure ongoing connection to industry needs.
- Implement a process for adding new professional education programs/courses.

Goal 2

Align and leverage SPCS and University assets to develop programming that meets the needs of the Richmond community.

As a key University resource to support community engagement, SPCS is in a unique position to provide access to the campus for the greater Richmond community. Doing so helps support the University's access and affordability initiatives and expands our ability to serve local, under-served student populations. We maximize our effectiveness by exploring and enhancing cross-campus partnerships to best support the learning, co-curricular and extra curricular needs of our students.
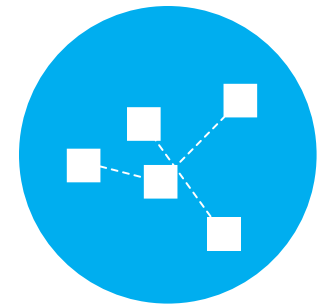
Initiatives

- Develop end to end, comprehensive programs to include degree programs and professional education offerings.
- Expand offerings in areas where SPCS can take the lead while leveraging the cooperation and expertise of other University of Richmond entities.
- Identify pathways for undergraduate degree completion for high school students with associate's degrees.

Goal 3

Encourage experimentation and innovation in SPCS to enhance students' learning experience and educational outcomes.

We will focus on developing innovation in teaching and learning by helping faculty explore, develop and evaluate innovative ways to use technology and new pedagogies in the design and implementation of courses. Doing so will allow SPCS to redefine the student experience by increasing programmatic flexibility while providing increased opportunities that extend and expand the academic experience.

Initiatives

- Design courses and programs to include greater use of technology to increase programmatic flexibility.
- Explore, test and implement innovations in instructional delivery to better meet the academic needs of students.
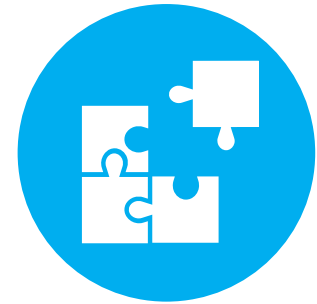- Position SPCS as an innovation incubator for instructional practice across the campus.

Goal 4

Integrate programs, services, and educational offerings with those of the University and of the other schools at UR to best meet the needs of students and the Richmond community.

Because SPCS is one of the five schools of the University, programs, services and educational offerings sometimes overlap. We seek to identify areas where integration of duplicated efforts or alignment of similar efforts can be achieved for programmatic and operational clarity and efficiencies, both in SPCS and in the larger University. We will focus on improving internal processes toward better serving SPCS and UR students as well as the Richmond community.

Initiatives

- Align all functions of SPCS to its core mission.
- Implement a business model which supports the SPCS mission and which aligns with the needs of the University.
- Enhance programs and support services for SPCS students.
- Invest in the development of programs that align with the academic strengths outlined in the University's strategic plan.

Goal 5

Build and strengthen relationships with key strategic partners representing key SPCS focus areas to increase access to SPCS for new students.

Because of the increased importance of word of mouth and tuition benefits in the adult student decision making process, external partners play an important role in our recruiting and marketing efforts. Working with key strategic partners allows us to engage with prospective students on a completely different level that includes personal, high-touch opportunities and often includes more direct access to qualified students.

Initiatives
- Develop a community engagement plan for SPCS.
- Identify and cultivate key strategic partnerships which represent SPCS focus and strength areas.

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Next Steps

We adopted a collaborative, integrative, four-phased approach to our strategic plan.

Phase 1 – Foundation Establishment included preliminary interviews with planning participants and key University and School leaders to understand the situation and establish alignment on purpose and goals. During Phase 1, we outlined our approach and process, set our timeline and defined deliverables.

Phase 2 – Landscape Assessment included extensive primary and secondary research to assess our current landscape. We examined current local, regional and national trends and explored future predictors. We utilized a mix of focus groups, interviews and surveys to gather data.

We are currently in the final part of **Phase 3 – Plan Development**. Working groups were established to evaluate initiatives and develop recommendations for implementation. We are now sharing the final draft of the plan with members of our key stakeholder groups.

As we move ahead, we will concentrate our efforts on **Phase 4 – Plan Implementation**.

The feedback we gather in Phase 3 will inform our implementation plan as will an assessment of priorities based on the initial reports from our working groups.

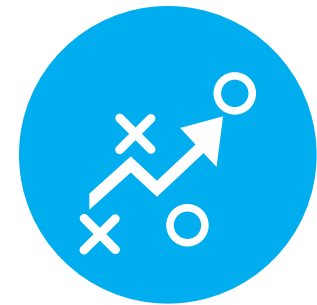## Key First Year Milestones by Term

Summer 2017
- Review and feedback on final draft of the plan by key stakeholders groups.
- Initial implementation plan developed.

Fall 2017
- Strategic plan shared publicly.
- Implementation plan shared with key stakeholder groups.
- Implementation begins with Immediate Priorities (year 1).

Spring 2018
- Implementation continues with Immediate Priorities.
- Planning begins for implementation of Short Term Priorities (years 2-3).

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