

**Building the New SOU:
Strategic Plan for Distinction and Sustainability
2009-2014**

Mission and Commitments

SOU Mission Statement

Approved 2.08

Southern Oregon University is an inclusive campus community dedicated to student success, intellectual growth, and responsible global citizenship.

Commitments

Southern Oregon University is committed to

- a challenging and practical liberal arts education centered on student learning, accessibility, and civic engagement;
- academic programs, partnerships, public service, outreach, sustainable practices, and economic development activities that address regional needs such as health and human services, business, and education; and
- outstanding programs that draw on and enrich our unique arts community and bioregion.

Planning Processes

Southern Oregon University has experienced significant changes and challenges over the last decade: changes in executive leadership, finances, and enrollments; changes in the Chancellor's Office, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education (OSBHE), and economic conditions within the State of Oregon.

With these changes, we have periodically developed strategic plans to provide direction and position the university more effectively. In 1998, SOU developed a plan entitled "Focusing Southern's Mission by Building on Strengths," which centered on signature academic programs. The next major planning effort, in 2000–2001, outlined four goals with accompanying initiatives:

- manage growth while preserving and enhancing access (enrollment management initiative);
- enhance academic quality and reputation (partnerships initiative, student-centered environment initiative, visibility initiative);
- improve management and administrative functions (accountability initiative, integrated planning initiative); and

- develop the university's human and physical resources (employee value initiative, diversity initiative, physical environment initiative, campus atmosphere initiative).

In 2001, SOU hired the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to assist with planning. SOU used this planning effort to clarify existing budget realities and decision-making strategies for on-campus stakeholders. As part of that effort, SOU joined the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), which helped to define our mission on campus and within the state.

In fall 2006, SOU faced serious financial and enrollment challenges. In academic year 2006-2007, the University developed a retrenchment process that attempted both to align resources and to maintain core services and commitments of the university. Through the use of open forums, focused meetings, and web communication, this process was made as consultative as possible given very short timelines.

While undergoing this retrenchment process, and preparing for our re-accreditation site visit, the president formed a strategic planning task force of faculty and administrators, with one student member. This group drafted various versions of a university mission statement that was reviewed on campus and by the OSBHE. The final version (see above) was approved in February 2008.

In fall 2008, the provost initiated a Master Academic Planning (MAP) process. The Vice President for Student Affairs and his staff created an Enrollment Management Plan as well as a strategic plan for Student Affairs. Planning has also been undertaken for areas such as facilities, budgeting, marketing, affirmative action, recruitment, technology, and fundraising. In 2008, also, the university hired the SimpsonScarborough consulting firm to assist with a university-wide branding process.

In winter and spring 2009, a number of open forums were held to discuss the branding process, the MAP, the facilities master plan, and the strategic planning draft. Plans were discussed with the Academic Senate, the Associated Student Senate, and other groups across campus. In summer 2009, the president's Cabinet and the Executive Council met in retreat formats to align the various plans and prepare presentations to campus in fall 2009.

All these planning efforts have helped individual areas define goals, priorities, values, actions, and timelines for the coming years. Any campus planning for SOU, moreover, must reflect and respond to the state's ongoing economic upheavals as well as system-level performance indicators developed by the Chancellor's Office and supported by the OSBHE. Meeting or surpassing individual campus benchmarks is essential for ongoing support from the state and the Oregon University System.

This strategic plan, **Building the New SOU: Strategic Plan for Distinction and Sustainability 2009-2014**, has been developed to provide structure for decision-making, to strengthen thematic coherence for area plans, and to underscore the University's goals, values, and commitments for the next five years.

Strategic Direction

Southern Oregon University will be known for the following distinctive characteristics*

- Graduates who become productive leaders in their fields;
- Graduates proficient in critical thinking, communication, information literacy, and intellectual creativity who discover strength through connections to the wider external world and the unique environment of southern Oregon.
- Engaged students, faculty, and staff committed to diversity, sustainable practices, and responsiveness to regional and global needs
- An inclusive learning environment, enhanced by student-faculty collaboration, that promotes success for diverse learners both face-to-face and through technology
- Significant contributions to the arts and the southern Oregon bioregion

**These characteristics reflect research undertaken by SimpsonScarborough during the branding process as well as SOU's mission statement and input from faculty, students, staff, and community members throughout planning processes.*

Goals for 2009-2014

In support of the above strategic direction, the following four goals serve as the basis for university strategic planning and as a foundation for individual unit plans.

Goal 1: Academic Distinctiveness and Quality: Heighten and sustain a powerful university culture that supports and inspires intellectual creativity, connected learning, and a passion for making a difference.

- A. Foster a lifetime commitment to diversity, leadership, and connected learning.
- B. Demonstrate a commitment to academic quality, intellectual creativity, and responsiveness to global and community needs.
- C. Leverage curricular opportunities with external academic partners.
- D. Nurture and promote applied undergraduate and graduate research and creative expression.
- E. Honor and celebrate excellence in teaching and scholarship.
- F. Provide ongoing professional development for faculty and staff.
- G. Promote collaboration among disciplines and other campus programs.
- H. Emphasize vibrant, sustainable, academic and residential/commuter communities.
- I. Ensure that student support and extracurricular activities reflect the academic values of the campus.

Goal 2: Commitment to the Arts and the Region: Ensure that curricula, research, and outreach reflect the environmental, economic, and cultural priorities of our region.

- A. Expand and promote nationally and internationally known arts and environmental programs.
- B. Strengthen relationships with regional arts organizations and natural resource agencies and partners.
- C. Ensure that a robust University Studies curriculum reflects our commitments to the arts and bioregion.
- D. Develop capstones in every major that foster creative approaches to the discipline.
- E. Intentionally integrate the arts and sustainability throughout the curriculum and the university culture.
- F. Expand research opportunities in our bioregion.
- G. Ensure that SOU's facilities and physical campuses mirror our distinctiveness and commitment to the arts and bioregion.

Goal 3: Community Partner and Catalyst: Strengthen the University's role as economic and cultural partner and catalyst for external communities.

- A. Strengthen the university's role as an economic and cultural leader.
- B. Position SOU as a leader in sustainability, diversity, creativity, and culture.
- C. Communicate regularly with internal and external constituents as programs are developed, refined, and assessed.
- D. Continue to explore and develop opportunities with external partners that reinforce our identity as a university and enhance our value in the region and beyond.
- E. Ensure that university programs are responsive to students and to regional, national, and global needs.
- F. Strengthen and promote community-based learning as a component of academic programs and students' educational experience.
- G. Increase quantity and effectiveness of mentoring for students, staff, faculty, and alumni.
- H. Increase opportunities for interaction between the external community and the university constituents, both on and off campus.

Goal 4: Financial Sustainability: Increase the University's fiscal stability through enrollment management, budget development and alignment, strategic partnerships, and fundraising.

- A. Develop a dynamic, diverse SOU student body that reflects the goals of the Master Academic Plan and the Enrollment Management Plan.
- B. Implement the Development Plan to increase external support and significantly expand an international community of SOU alumni, retirees, and friends.
- C. Develop and enhance international partnerships.
- D. Ensure that the budget development process aligns with strategic goals.
- E. Collect and analyze data to inform budget decisions.
- F. Ensure that program priorities drive budget decisions.
- G. Implement marketing strategies to support strategic goals.