



An Assessment of the Chancellor's Plan for Shawnee State University

conducted by

Dr. Watson Scott Swail
Ms. Kimberly A. Landis

JANUARY 2013

Contents

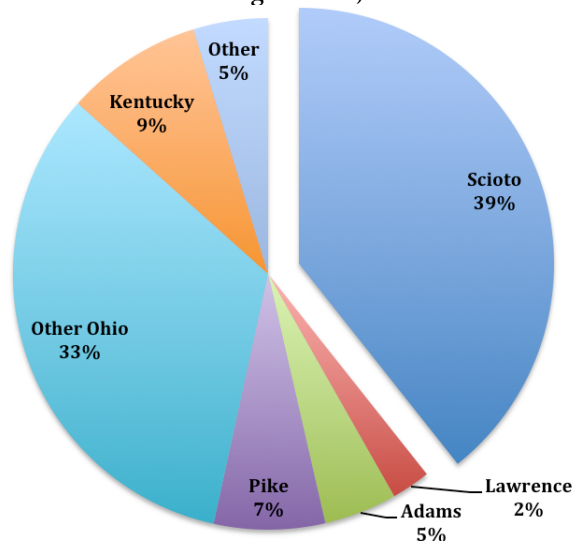
INTRODUCTION	2
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AT SSU	4
DATA, ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNICATIONS	4
RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS	8
ACADEMIC SUPPORT	10
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION	13
ADVISING	14
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	17
PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIVES	17
APPENDIX	22

INTRODUCTION

Shawnee State University, founded in 1986, currently enrolls approximately 4,700 undergraduate students, of which 83 percent are full-time status. Eighty-eight percent of SSU students are Ohioans, with only 9 percent coming from across the river in Kentucky. Shawnee employs over 300 full- and part-time faculty and has over 80 BA and associates programs.

Shawnee State University is based in Portsmouth, Ohio, residing on the border of Kentucky with an urban population of 20,000 and suburban population of 80,000 (2010). Portsmouth has long been an industrial town, and boasted a population twice its current size back in the 1920s due to steel, rail, and other industry. However, the depression forced major declines in industry and helped pave the way for a large-scale reduction in population and historic high rates of unemployment that are still evident today. Currently, 24 percent of the Portsmouth population lives under the poverty level and 11.5 percent are unemployed. Household income in Portsmouth is almost half of that national average (\$27,610 vs. \$50,935). The university serves an area affectionately known as “SLAP,” an acronym for the four-county area inclusive of Scioto, Lawrence, Adams, and Pike counties. These four counties contribute approximately 55 percent of all undergraduate students attending SSU, with Scioto County accounting for 40 percent of all SSU undergraduates.

Exhibit 1. Distribution of SSU Undergraduates, Fall 2012



The economic conditions of the Portsmouth area serve as both the strengths and weaknesses of Shawnee State University. The institution serves a critical role in the city, providing a highly-educated workforce and opportunities for local citizens to engage in education and prepare for a post-industrial workforce. However, the relatively low-education and preparation of potential and current students has a direct impact on SSU's

ability to help these students graduate. In total, only 59 percent of SSU students return to a second year, and the four-year graduation rates of BA-directed students is only 10.5 percent, rising to 20.5 percent after six years.

To further exacerbate the context of affluence, more than half of SSU students (57 percent) receive a Pell Grant, and while 85 percent of students are white, they are mostly white Appalachian students from low-income backgrounds. Because of the low-income population served by SSU, the institution has one of the lowest tuition rates in the state. In 2012, instate tuition was \$6,132, compared to \$8,679 at Ohio State University; a difference of \$2,547 or 30 percent less than OSU.

By mission, SSU is an open-admissions institution, meaning that it is non-selective and allows anyone who meets the basic requirements into the university. This has much to do with the lower-graduation rates when compared to other institutions and poses a significant challenge to institutional policy and practice.

All told, the challenges facing SSU are immense. In early 2012, Chancellor Jim Petro of the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) issued a plan to “improve course completion, retention, and graduation rates” at SSU through a concerted effort by the institution and OBR. The plan focuses on three overarching goals:

- Goal 1. Increase course completion by 1-3 percent per year
- Goal 2. Increase the number of students earning associate and/or baccalaureate degrees by 1-3 percent per year
- Goal 3. Further its service to the Appalachian region by strengthening relationships with key regional employers and school districts

The Educational Policy Institute (EPI) was hired by OBR to conduct a review of the institution and provide feedback on how the institution can deliver towards these three goals. The study was directed by EPI's President & CEO, Dr. Watson Scott Swail, a noted expert on student retention and persistence in higher education, and Ms. Kimberly Landis, an expert of college access and success and a former director of Jefferson, Ohio-based Ashtabula County Continued Educational Support Services (ACCESS).

Beginning in June 2012, EPI began informal conversations with SSU personnel, led by Dr. Brenda Haas, SSU's Dean of the University College, who was also named Retention Coordinator this summer by SSU president Dr. Rita Morris.

EPI conducted two site visits to SSU, the first in July 2012 and the second in August 2012. During each visit, Dr. Swail and Ms. Landis met with various representatives of faculty, staff, and students at the institution. On the second visit, they also met with the OBR Plan Implementation & Monitoring Team, led by Provost Dave Todt, and including two representatives from OBR.

Under the leadership of Dr. Swail, SSU conducted internal discussions about policies and practices at the institution, and in October of 2012, Dr. Swail conducted over 20 interviews of SSU stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and trustees. EPI also reviewed data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and other materials provided by SSU.

This report provides a summary of our review, with specific focus on the Chancellor's goals. The purpose of this report is not to advise SSU exactly what path to follow. Rather, it is an advisory of considerations that should be made with regards to each goal of the Chancellor's plan. In the end, SSU must decide how to make improvements to student growth and development, ultimately resulting in greater academic achievement and completion. But those policy and practical changes must be made from within. This report will hopefully provide guidance in those deliberations.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AT SSU

This section will talk specifically about pieces that we feel are important for the future success of SSU. Our dialogue is based on the original Chancellor's plan. However, during discussions with SSU, there was a consensus to alter the framework in order to better describe the SSU elements for success.

A matrix was developed providing priority levels for each strategy — high, medium, and low (see Exhibit 3, Page 23). Please note that a priority setting of “low” does not connote that the strategy is unimportant. Rather, that in the reality that not everything can be done at once, some strategies need to be tackled either later or at a different speed or intent than others. But the high priority status is reserved for areas where we think SSU can either begin or continue working on, as these areas have a high return on investment for time and effort.

There are seven sections in total, inclusive of Data, Analysis, and Communications; Recruitment and Admissions; Academic Support; Developmental Education; Advising; Professional Development; and Partnerships & Collaboratives.

DATA, ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Data collection and analysis is at the heart of institutional reform. Growth in a positive direction can only be understood through a benchmarking process so that all stakeholders can digest the progress. In the past few years, SSU has made great strides in their Office of Institutional Effectiveness. They are beginning to bring new light to the complexities of the student experience that will be of great benefit to everyone at SSU.

High Priority

1. Move institution goals from a fixed-percentage target to a continuous improvement target

The Chancellor's Plan talks about moving the yardstick of course and degree completions by 1-3 percent annually. While providing a numerical figure can be helpful for some, we strongly encourage a continuous-improvement approach which suggests not annual increases, but positive annual growth in these areas. A 2-percent growth assumption over 5 years would suggest a 10-percent cumulative increase. This may be legitimate for some areas, but not in others. We would rather see focus on positive improvement each year. We are not against setting a value for a five-year period (e.g., 5 percent value added), but we think SSU is better served by focusing on positive annual growth.

2. SSU shall conduct a full review of all course completion data over the past three academic years to fully understand academic trends.

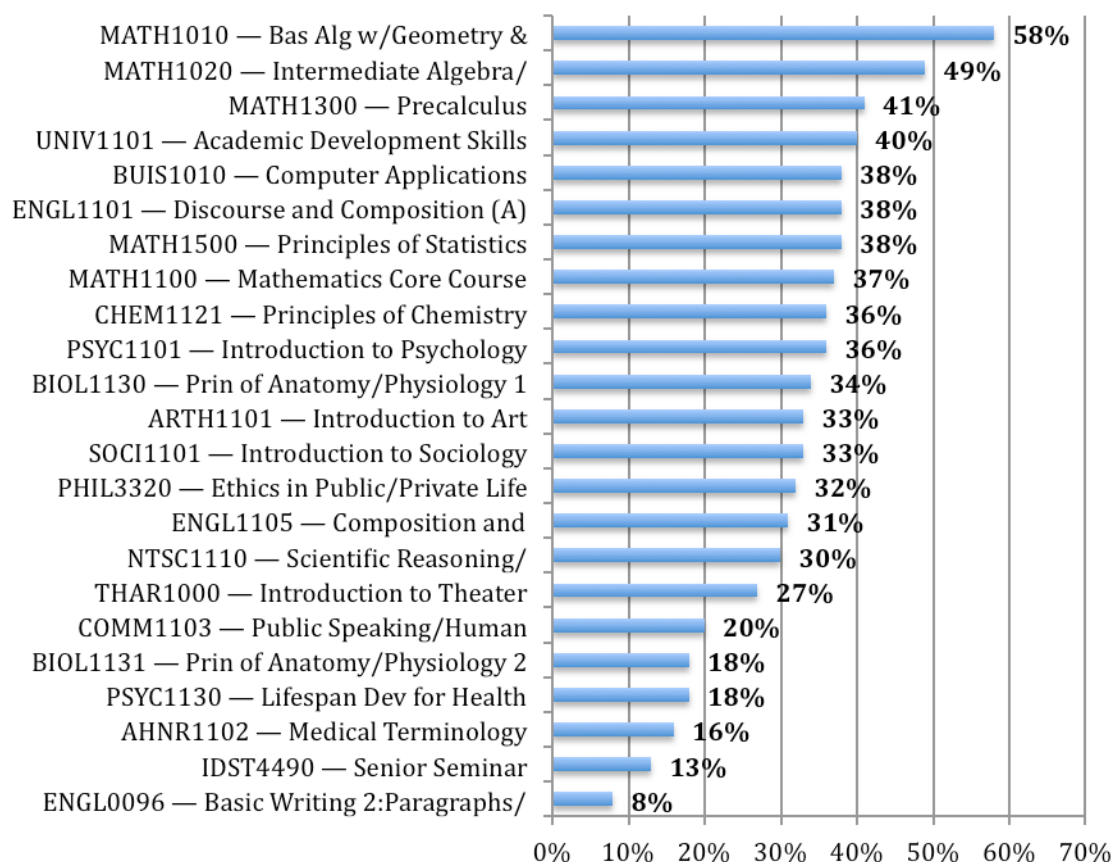
SSU has already been running new data with Tableau software that have uncovered very interesting student and course trends, especially with respect to admissions levers. We encourage the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to continue on this path, and build a system that can automatically produce student outcome analyses on a variety of issues.

3. Identify SSU courses with low completion rates.

SSU has already conducted much of this analysis. Exhibit 2 illustrates the highest DFW rates (percentage of students who have D or F grades, or withdraw) for SSU courses. Many of these courses are what we call "gatekeeper courses:" those that students must pass in order to earn a degree. For many SSU students, they never get past this hurdle in the process.

SSU is currently in the process of an in-depth analysis of these courses. It is important to understand what happens in these courses with high DFW rates. How much is lack of preparation on the part of students? How much is how the material is being taught, or by whom? This analysis must include discussions with faculty and other stakeholders to identify the core issues so that solutions can be put in place. In the end, finding out the answers to these questions is central to improving both course completion and graduation rates for students. It is at these gatekeeper moments that most SSU students leave the institution.

Exhibit 2. Highest SSU course enrollments with DFW rates (Sum of enrollment during the four years inclusive of 2008-09 to 2011-12)



NOTE: The numbers above represent a four-year sum of enrollment at SSU for analytical purposes.

4. Establish baseline figures for student success, including retention and graduation rates.

SSU has developed initial benchmark data. At this point, we strongly encourage creating a systematic approach that can allow for the production of standard retention and graduation, DFW, and other important reports on a regular basis and on a just-in-time basis upon request. This, combined with a reporting mechanism across campus to distribute data/information to deans, directors, VPs, and other staff will bring attention to the issues at a macro and micro level on campus. In addition, we encourage sharing these data to feeder high schools for their continuous improvement purposes.

Beyond basic fall-to-fall persistence and graduation rate analysis, data need to include a breakdown of demographic analysis by income (and Pell eligibility), race/ethnicity, and education legacy, while data should drill down to department level and classroom/instructor. We encourage breaking student groups into small constituencies on campus to determine where the “cracks” are in the system.

5. Implement or improve a campus-wide early alert system

SSU must have an early detection system in place to identify at-risk students before they step on campus (see also Partnerships and Collaboratives, page 17). It is prudent to provide instructional faculty with some background of the academic ability of their students, especially those who are academically at-risk. It is not difficult to red flag at-risk students so that instructors are aware of the potential for academic difficulty. Information from ACT, COMPASS, and other placement exams are helpful reports for instructors.

Critical to an early alert system is the feedback mechanism between instructional faculty, institutional staff, and administrators. An effective system requires timely data on student outcomes in order to “alert” the proper authority. Thus, there must be complete buy-in by all stakeholders.

The alert system needs to be housed centrally, with reporting to departments and vice versa.

6. Require faculty to provide inputs to the system, such as attendance, in order for the early alert to be productive and accurate.

Input from instructors (including adjunct faculty) is critical to the success of the system. As mentioned above, the system requires timely data in order to diagnose problems. For instance, an instructor can very quickly diagnose academic issues at the very start of the semester through quick quizzes and other assignments. In the first week of class, there should be some type of measure to see if students are engaged, let alone in attendance. If there is a problem, then strategies can be put in place, starting first at the instructional level, and then with help from University College and other supports on campus.

It is highly recommended that instructors keep attendance in their classes and report to University College or whatever central control is created any red flag students. Missing class is arguably the number one predictor of course withdrawal and failure for at-risk students. Keeping attendance is not very burdensome and can have high rewards with regard to student persistence and course completion.

Of course, the information of academic progress and attendance, as well as other data points, is only useful if used to help students. Instructional faculty need to understand what is (a) in their power to control in class; and (b) what the institution can do to support them.

Medium Priority

7. Utilize existing survey tools to design and administer a survey that will aid SSU in identifying new opportunities and program gaps.

SSU already uses a variety of survey tools to gauge campus climate and the student experience. We were presented with very interesting data that already was changing the way some on campus perceived the student success challenge at SSU. The

institutional surveys are inexpensive and easy to administer, and provide, when carefully designed, excellent data. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness then must have a strategy for analyzing and disseminating these data across SSU.

Low Priority

8. Begin monitoring and reporting of the Beginning College Survey of Student Satisfaction annually to SSU faculty and administration as part of the retention plan.

The Beginning College Survey of Student Satisfaction (BCSSS) is a respected normative survey. However, comparison of student data among institutions is not typically very useful. Most important is the internal analysis, which, as mentioned, SSU does with internal surveys. The BCSSS does provide meaningful illumination on core issues related to the student experience, and if this is warranted, we support that decision. We offer this as a lower-priority option because the national surveys are not a panacea for student success. Information from students can be enormously helpful for identifying challenge areas, as well as identifying things that the institution does well. However, student data can be ambivalent because they are typically unmotivated to complete the survey.

RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS

While SSU is an open admissions institution, there are important admissions guidelines that still must be followed. The admissions office is crucial to helping attract and admit a qualified student cohort. The process at SSU is made more challenging by the academic profile of students, especially those from SLAP counties.

High Priority

1. Conduct a thorough review of the admissions and registration process with an eye towards improvement for all students, with special focus on SSU's at-risk population.

Working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the admissions office needs to continue to review its processes to ensure that the policies and practices in use are appropriate for the university and the student population. The review of policies should be an ongoing process, and the institution should not shy away from making changes. If a policy has not been seen as effective, there is no reason to keep it. Just as students and other conditions change, so must the guidelines of the institution.

2. Enforce current admissions policies for incoming students

The stated admissions policy for SSU says that students under the age of 21 must have an ACT or SAT test score in order to be admitted to the institution. However, approximately 150 students each year who are under the age of 21 and have not submitted an admissions test are admitted to SSU. Further analysis by the university shows that this cohort has a 21 percent fall-to-fall retention rate, much lower than other cohort groups. While these students are admitted and show up for class and are part of the 15-day count, they do not persist at a meaningful rate at SSU.

3. Revise the placement processes to ensure that students are appropriately placed in courses and majors.

There are several tools that admissions personnel use to place students in class. The ACT, SAT, and COMPASS are tests that can be effectively used to help with this process. There was some sentiment on campus that too many students are misplaced in classes either too advanced or too developmental for their actual skill level. More focus and assessment on better placements needs to be made. A poor placement often results in student departure.

4. Continue to work toward a seamless process of admissions so that anxiety and confusion of students and families is reduced.

Admissions processes are known to frustrate students and families, especially those who are first-generation and/or low-income, Pell eligible. Admissions personnel need to look carefully at their processes from the viewpoint of those who know next to nothing about the process. When students go away frustrated and/or intimidated, it may be enough to dissuade them from returning. This isn't a condemnation of the personnel, but a reminder that many students have trouble navigating the admissions and financial aid waters at institutions of higher education.

5. Align the general education outcomes for students

General education programs (GenEd) are standard components of a degree program. The purpose of GenEd is to ensure that all students receive a core set of courses that are diverse to aid their personal and academic growth. This purpose is warranted. However, it is worth assessing if the GenEd requirements at SSU are appropriate for all students. Alternatively stated, we recommend that the institution take an inward look at their program and determine if additional flexibility can be provided to students. Currently, there are GenEd requirements that shut out students due to their lack of prowess in certain academic areas. A case in point is the *Introduction to Psychology* (PSYC1101) course, which attracts over 1,200 students each year — the largest introductory course on campus. Of those students, 36 percent earn a D, F or withdrawal from the course because it is a challenging course with regards to reading, writing, and comprehension. Interestingly, the GenEd requirements do not require students to enroll specifically in PSYCH 1101, but most do, either because they are advised to do so or because their peers tell them to enroll. The question isn't whether students can benefit from taking PSYCH 1101, but rather, whether so many freshman students with relatively low reading and writing skills should be pushed through this or other similarly rigorous courses during their freshman year. The same case can be made for some other mathematics and science courses, to be sure (see back to Exhibit 2). The underlying question for SSU is whether the GenEd program should be altered to allow for other strengths of students, instead of providing a barrier to many students when we know, via data, that current academic deficiencies make it difficult for such a high percentage of students to succeed.

Revising the GenEd program isn't a silver bullet, obviously. It is one of many pieces recommended for improvement. How students are counseled into and out of these courses matters tremendously, especially for first-generation, Pell-eligible students.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The academic prowess of SSU students is the Achilles Heal for many. This report has already discussed red flagging students who are academically at-risk. Once identified, the academic support (and, to be sure, social supports) systems must be in place to help students gain control of their education. SSU data show that many students who come with low-test scores are retained at low rates. The question for SSU is whether the academic support system can be both intrusive and effective to guide students toward success.

High Priority

1. Identify students who are at-risk for course completion.

As described in the Chancellor's plan, SSU must quickly identify students who are "at-risk" and provide them with the necessary supports for success. On a moral and ethical level, it is SSU's responsibility, as an open-admissions institution, to ensure that students who enter have a legitimate, if not reasonable, chance of academic success. If not, then it follows that those students should not be admitted. This is an obvious Catch 22 for SSU, but it is part of the challenge of any open-admissions institution. The SSU leadership and staff are well aware of this responsibility and the challenges that come with it.

2. Provide targeted supplemental instruction for students in courses with low completion rates.

Once students are identified, SSU must provide supplemental instruction to support student learning. There are many good designs of this type of support, including the official SI system from the University of Missouri – Kansas City. SSU has conducted SI-type programs before and these need to be reviewed and, as with all strategies, updated to ensure their rigor and effectiveness.

3. Provide intrusive advising for at-risk students.

These students must be provided with proactive and intrusive advising so that their pathway to academic success is clear. Students need to know why they are on the path, why these courses matter, and the strategies to succeed (See Advising on page 14).

4. Institute a First Year Experience Program.

Initiating a First-Year Experience (FYE) program, which SSU already has in place, is a useful and important endeavor for the institution. FYE programs provide a foundation to ensure that students are provided with critical information and skills in an intentional and intrusive manner. Thousands of institutions across the US and Canada have used FYE as a primary strategy in their quest to improve student success.

However, we will warn that some institutions fail in their student success initiatives by over-focusing on FYE. The program provides a foundation or framework for success, but it is only one of many tools that must be used. Data from SSU is clear that students do not only leave during the first and second semesters, but also during their sophomore and junior years. FYE is a freshman platform and additional strategies must be used and/or continued in subsequent years to support student success. Providing a “degree-oriented” experience is critical to helping students navigate their SSU experience. This starts with FYE but continues throughout their SSU experience.

The effectiveness of FYE hinges on the identification of at-risk students. While FYE is typically designed for all freshman students, special emphasis must be placed on the at-risk population. If SSU is proactive with these students, the chance for course and degree success is greatly improved.

Another core element of FYE success is the seamless integration of services and offices at SSU. University College and other strategies recently implemented at SSU provide a platform for moving from silos of service for students to an integrated model that is much easier for students to navigate. All SSU students, upon admission to SSU, should have a reasonable-if-not-clear understanding of the FYE process. This obviously relates to communications, freshman orientation, academic advising, financial aid, residence life, and other important aspects of freshman college life.

Many institutions have had success with a core FYE course during the freshman year. Most success comes from courses that are credit bearing, as it is clear that student motivation is limited when they understand that the course has little impact on their academic bearing.

5. Develop and implement student centered supportive services for identified at-risk students including mentorship.

Institutions like SSU must develop “safety nets” for students. These are the services that sometimes look invisible but are there to help students when needed. Sometimes they are academic; other times they are more social, like mentoring, which is used primarily to provide a meaningful image or role model for students while also assisting with knowledge acquisition.

The University College and FYE programs are perfect settings for these types of programs, but departments must also ensure that they have safety nets in place. This starts with identification of students with needs and then the matching of those needs with people or practices. SSU needs to assess the level of these support services, how they are valued, and the efficacy of these programs.

Medium Priority

6. Develop specific strategies that target commuter vs. residential students at SSU.

The academic and social needs of commuter and residential students are typically far different. While residential education has grown at SSU over the years, most students are still commuting from home or from relatively close proximity. Residential life has its challenges with trying to serve students who are around a majority of the day and night. The effort required to support student life on campus is challenging: residence halls, food services, and safety, to name a few. For commuter students, issues of parking is a primary area of concern and complaint, but even more challenging is to integrate commuter students into campus life when they only show up for their classes. Thus, what happens in the classroom is very important for commuters, and instructors must be cognizant of this critical aspect of student life and success.

SSU needs to study the various support programs for both residential and commuter students, anticipating the needs of both communities and ensuring that there are diverse strategies to support success.

7. Create a First Year Experience course for all students entering SSU.

This item is separated from the discussion on FYE because it is somewhat different. Although linked to FYE, successful programs do not always have to have a separate course, although it is encouraged. Other elements in FYE are more important at the outset of SSU programming. SSU is working with variations on one credit hour courses and other pieces that play on this strategy.

Low Priority

8. Expand the distance learning opportunities (including blended courses), led by the academic faculty with support of administration, that are targeted to increasing course completion.

These are considered low priority because they have a longer timeline than other strategies. From an SSU perspective, distance education helps expand SSU's market and reach. From the student perspective, distance-learning options can expand scheduling options for students, even those who reside on campus. We heard several stories of students not being able to complete programs in a timely matter because of courses that were only offered on an occasional basis, such as once a year, and sometimes less so. This is a problem at many institutions around the country.

Certainly, providing online courses for commuter students can be of great assistance, especially for students who live far away from campus.

This discussion requires integration with the general education requirements regarding what courses students require for graduation, and whether there can be additional flexibility for courses completed.

9. Develop alternative time frameworks and formats for courses, i.e., three-year degree completion programs.

There has been discussion of new variations on the bachelor's degree, especially a three-year bachelor's degree. We strongly encourage any review of the current requirements that could lead to greater access to and completion through higher education. That stated, the traditional student cohort at SSU is likely to be less well served by a three-year, accelerated program (if it is, in fact, accelerated). All possibilities should be reviewed as there may be even other alternatives for consideration.

DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

Developmental education continues to be a concern and challenge at SSU. Efforts are ongoing to re-design the developmental education model at SSU and staff are very positive about the potential for success. The immediate significance of this is that over half of SSU freshman students (54 percent) are directed into developmental/remedial courses.

High Priority

1. Bring all developmental courses in to one place on campus (University College).

The move to an integrated, one-stop shop for developmental education via University College is appropriate. This makes it easier to keep tabs on at-risk students, many of whom are enrolled in multiple remedial courses. Most academic units on campus have bought into this strategy, but not all. It is important that everyone conforms to this model as it has proven success at other institutions.

2. Implement best practices of developmental courses into SSU courses.

Several recent reports on best practices in developmental education have been released in the months prior to this report. When available, we have forwarded this information on to SSU for consideration. SSU should dissect available information and use appropriately for the specifics of their campus and student population. It is our understanding that SSU is working toward a new developmental practice.

3. Ensure that faculty are integrated into the process.

Ultimately, instructional faculty are the conduit to success for students. It is important that course structure/syllabi, and professional development/teaching pedagogy are factored into the design of developmental courses. Students enrolled in developmental courses are those who have failed these courses before. Doing the same thing the same way will not help them succeed. Because of the learning issues that many developmental students have, there must be different pedagogical strategies by faculty in place.

4. Review the scheduling process of students with developmental courses.

There exists some concern about the scheduling of developmental courses on campus. Courses need to be intensive, requiring consideration of what other courses students are enrolled in at the time. If these courses are scheduled while students are taking

other, difficult courses, they may not succeed. Second, these courses need to be scheduled in a time that is conducive to learning, not simply when a slot is open in the calendar. And third, these courses are best scheduled when there is no delay between consecutive courses of a similar nature. That is, a lag between courses that results in the loss of knowledge.

5. **Revise policies for students who fail out of developmental courses multiple times.**
There is significant discussion on campus about developmental students who remain in the vortex of these courses. There needs to be updated policy on what happens when students fail a particular course multiple times, and what academic support services can be put in place to reduce this occurrence.

ADVISING

Academic advising is a critical task related to student success at SSU. SSU advisors are the primary conduit between students (and families) and ensure that students are aware of what is happening and what the road to success looks like. Advisors must be intrusive with students and also keep regular contact with student, especially during the first year.

High Priority

1. **Improve the selection and training process for advisors.**
SSU needs to take an inward look at how well academic advising is conducted on campus and provide professional development to ensure that advisors are well trained. Advisors need to have information about each student and the permutations of opportunities to help students succeed. There exist countless stories in postsecondary education of students taking extra credits and extra years based in part on poor advising. Time and money is too valuable not to have well-trained and informed advisors.

Advisors must understand the nuances of dealing with students and occasionally family members, and be cognizant of the issues facing first-time students.

2. **Utilize data in the advising process so that students understand what success AND failure look like at SSU.**

SSU needs to provide a standardized process, beginning with identification of students, through admissions and orientation, to inform students and their parents about the realities and expectations of college. Considering that 4 of 5 SSU students have first-generation status, expectations have to be marked out clearly for SSU students. Nothing can be taken for granted.

We are of the belief that students, at entry, need to be advised about all and everything regarding the university experience. While we know that some students at SSU may need more “hand-holding” than others, we also think that SSU should be extremely—if *not extraordinarily*—honest with students about what success requires

given his or her academic background. Students should be told exactly what success looks like:

- how much they should study;
- how to manage their time;
- what services on campus they should use; and
- who they can and should talk to on a regular basis for advice.

Like all issues, SSU needs to follow the three “I”s: be **Intentional**, **Intensive**, and **Intrusive**. This should be automatic, and SSU needs to ensure that ALL students are given an individual plan that shows students how to succeed at SSU. The administration, in partnership with staff and faculty, must find a better way to support students through academic advising. SSU has mentioned the possibility of hiring more professional advisors. We support that initiative.

Advising must work in concert with admissions, student services, and academic services to ensure that students know what they need to know. There should exist a checklist that advisors go over with students which advises them how to succeed. Regression analysis can be provided by the IR department on what factors seem to matter for success at SSU, although from other studies we clearly know what most of these things are: time management, study skills, and limited work schedules are at the top of the list.

All this goes back to the intentionality dimension: that SSU is being clear and forthright with students about their chances of success. Not all students who enter SSU can or will be successful, but SSU faculty and staff must believe that most can with the assistance of prudent policy and practices at SSU that place student success as the central focus on campus.

We agree that other alternative forms of certificates can be provided to students that show progress, such as a certificate for 30 and 60 hours of study. However, we also strongly encourage the review of all degree programs to ensure that students are enrolling in courses that are essential to their success and their future vocation. SSU, as with all institutions of higher education, should be looking for new pathways to success, including academic “badges” and competency-driven curricula.

Ensure that there exists a clearly-articulated pathway to success, especially for those students that are less likely to make the cut to the selective programs (such as Associate's of Applied Science studies, where 200 students are enrolled in a program with only 20 spots). SSU and other institutions play an ethically fine line in admitting students to programs that simply do not have the admission capacity upon successful completion of the preparatory courses. At a minimum, we feel that SSU has an obligation to advise students about their chance of successful admission to the program, and perhaps even a notification of their slot in line for a spot (e.g., 121st on the list for the 20 slots available may make a difference). Currently, students enroll without true knowledge of their chances in the health sciences. Alternatively, SSU

should make more academic possibilities known to students, so that those who do successfully complete the prerequisite courses but do not gain entrance to the selective degree offering have other programs for their consideration.

Also refer to our comments (page 9) on the GenEd program and our claim that some advisors schedule students into courses that they cannot be successful in during their freshman year.

3. Make the advising process far more proactive for students and ensure that it occurs as early and as often as possible.

For SSU students, advising should begin at or before orientation. Too many schools begin the process after students begin the first semester. By then, students are already behind in their knowledge of the system. Active advising starts early and is continual. Similarly, students must remain in contact with advisors often during the freshman and sophomore processes, and at least annually after. This is very much a front-loaded strategy.

We recommend revising current academic advising policies and practices to ensure that students get adequate time with advisors each semester throughout their experience at SSU. This may require reducing the ratio of advisors to students (see previous comments), improving the quality of advising, and being proactive in ensuring that students receive advising in regular interviews and on an as-needed basis in between. There are innovative practices in academic advising and SSU, if not already, should be aware of these practices. As well, community partnerships may be able to aid the advising process, such as local ACCESS programs, who specialize in advising.

4. Entrench social advising within the academic advising process, or have separate advisors to deal with non-cognitive/non-academic issues.

Advising is not only about academic progress. Often, other non-cognitive issues for students are the key to success and failure. Advisors must be trained accordingly to deal with these issues and direct students toward services on or off campus to help, when appropriate.

Medium Priority

5. Design or purchase a tracking system in order to track advising and academic progress for students.

SSU has a tracking system in place, but there needs to be a more sophisticated system - *or process* - to let students know where they stand with regard to their academic and career goals. This should be an intricate component of the advising process so that advisors, and students, are following the same details and progress charts.

- 6. Develop a communication plan to share with students and parents upon matriculation on cost of not completing degree in a timely manner.**

An important component of advising is to also tell students and families the challenges of NOT completing their degree, especially for those who have completed a substantial number of credit hours (e.g., 30+).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All SSU instructional staff must have appropriate and timely professional development in areas of content and also of student success. The professional development activities must provide information that will help them interact and guide students.

High Priority

- 1. Enhance professional development opportunities for staff with special focus on pedagogical strategies for instructional staff**

SSU must continue to provide quality professional development for faculty and staff. As with all things SSU, the administration, in concert with faculty and staff, must ensure that core professional development provides opportunities for improvement and growth, especially with regard to classroom pedagogy. Now that SSU has a tenured program, teaching must be at the core of tenure decisions and professional development and training should be a pivotal piece of this strategy. Far too often, teaching is taken for granted in higher education. Good teachers just happen to be good teachers. But good colleges don't take teaching for granted. They provide teaching centers (as does SSU), professional development, and a focus that promotes teaching excellence. None of this is by accident. As with all student success strategies, teaching needs to be developed, and should not be relegated to a "by chance" outcome. Professional development for teaching needs to be mandated and supported in a way that allows for both individual development and collective excellence.

SSU has already improved processes for adjunct faculty through their new adjunct orientation program and a series of adjunct academy courses that is open to all part-time faculty.

- 2. Provide forums and workshops for staff regarding student retention, persistence, and success.**

In addition to pedagogy, faculty and staff need to be regularly updated on the retention and persistence of students within their departments and across campus. Everyone who comes in contact with students must have a full understanding of the services and opportunities for student support so they can direct students to the appropriate office or person.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIVES

How SSU interacts with the local community is key to the enrichment of the SSU culture, and also provides important linkages with key stakeholders of students before they

arrive at SSU (school districts and community) and after they leave SSU (business/industry/alumni).

High Priority

1. Provide districts with data on the performance of their graduates at SSU.

School districts require pertinent information on how their graduates achieved at SSU. This information will help the districts understand better how they are preparing their students for college-level work and careers. SSU should provide all districts, and perhaps schools, with regular data on recent students and/or cohorts.

2. Work with districts to align the common core curriculum with college readiness expectations.

The new Common Core State Standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/>) must be used as a conduit between the SLAP schools and SSU. The elementary and secondary school standards were designed with college matriculation in mind, and it is up to the local entities to clearly understand the standards and provide curricular and pedagogical considerations to meet these standards. The success of the Common Core State Standards, of which Ohio is one of 45 states that have adopted the standards, is based on the partnership of SSU and local schools, with SLAP districts central to this partnership. This will require re-investing in a gap analysis of content at the secondary and postsecondary levels to ensure both compliance to the standards and to the needs of a future workforce. This alignment will also assist with college placement strategies for SSU.

With the standards as a backdrop, elementary and secondary teachers in SLAP counties will need to be trained and re-trained for cutting-edge pedagogy and assessment skills. The Standards themselves will be insignificant in their impact if teachers are not adequately trained.

This is a unique opportunity to bring the schools/districts and SSU closer together on the academic front. As a trainer of thousands of local area teachers, SSU has a responsibility to be at the forefront of the Common Core movement.

3. Work with local high schools and community organizations to ensure students are prepared and complete ACT/SAT admissions exams.

Students at SSU are required to complete the ACT or SAT exam for admissions. If students have not done so, they are unable to be admitted to the school. Thus, a major barrier for future students is that they have not completed this necessary requirement. SSU can work in partnership with the schools to ensure that this requirement is completed before graduation.

Medium Priority

4. Develop collaborative improvement plans with key regional secondary schools to reduce incoming SSU student remediation rates.

These set of strategies are considered medium priority because they are on a longer-term basis. The work needs to start (more accurately, continue) immediately, but the progress will be slower. Without doubt, the relation between SSU and the local school districts in the SLAP counties is critical to future student success at SSU.

These districts prepare 60 percent of SSU students, and Scioto County accounts for over 1/3 of SSU students. There exists, by proximity if not by design, a mutually symbiotic relationship between SSU and the districts, in that the former trains many of the district teachers, administrators, and staff, while the latter in turn prepare the students that SSU will inherit at some point. Thus, it is less about passing the buck than ensuring that all aspects of student success are considered in teacher preparation and in curriculum and instruction at the elementary and secondary levels. SSU and the SLAP institutions must continue to forge a path ahead for student success.

SSU and SLAP districts are best served by entrenching collaboration in their regular processes, whether through P20-type partnerships or other, perhaps additional, collaboratives. This is even more essential with Portsmouth City Schools (PCS), which provides the largest number of SSU freshman. The proximity of PCS and SSU allow both entities great opportunity to mold the academic preparation and matriculation process.

Integration between local schools and the university is always a positive development. We agree that using SSU students to mentor future and incoming students is a good idea. A consideration for SSU is how these students are trained and what information they are to provide to future students in a manner that is universal and consistent.

5. Identify existing gaps between content taught in high schools and college readiness expectations in English, language arts, and mathematics.

SSU and the districts, as part of the Common Core State Standards initiative, need to review all curricula and identify gaps in content and make adjustments. Without doing so, students who come from SLAP and other districts will be at a unique disadvantage and likely will not succeed or will have much difficulty succeeding.

6. Work to align high school curriculum and college placement expectations.

The course and major placement process is still a work in progress at SSU. The alignment of curriculum will go a long way to address this issue, but the prudent use of diagnostic testing, perhaps beyond COMPASS, will assist this process.

7. Continue to evolve the teacher preparation, induction, and professional development programs based on input from SLAP institutions.

SSU is a leader in teacher education. With that comes the responsibility to work with the local school districts to improve teacher education (again, especially with regard to

the Common Core State Standards), as well as teacher induction programs (professional development programs for initial teachers in the field), and ongoing professional development at the district level. Districts are often left on their own for professional development, which makes little sense given the expertise and knowledge of SSU faculty in education and in content areas. It would make more sense for the districts and SSU to have a closer partnership on induction and ongoing professional development.

8. Continue to offer and expand dual credit offerings, PSEOP, and support for AP courses.

Dual credit offerings continue to grow and evolve nationally. As well, the Ohio Post Secondary Enrollment Options Program (PSEOP), which provides opportunities for high school students to take college courses, and Advance Placement (AP) programs, which provides access to college-level content and instruction, provide opportunities for high school students to earn college credit before they enter SSU. However, only qualified high school students are eligible for these courses. The challenge is three fold: (a) to provide more dual credit options for high school students; (b) get more high school students academically ready for this level of course work; and (c) ensure that more high school teachers are well trained to teach college-level courses.

9. Build upon existing partnerships and create new opportunities for student internship placements.

Many of the majors at SSU require and/or benefit from internships and other placement opportunities. The challenge brought to our attention is the lack of business and industries in Southern Ohio to create new internship programs. Everyone on campus believes this is a good idea. But the challenge is to find new possibilities in this region of the state.

10. Increase the number of clinical, internship, and field experience opportunities.

As with the previous item, there needs to be further outreach to a limited number of businesses and industries, especially in the health sciences field given the number of SSU students in that area, to create additional opportunities.

Low Priority

The following three strategies require further integration between SSU and local business and industry, including the development of mentors for SSU students, as well as input from external stakeholders on revised curricula.

11. Devise a strategy to provide mentoring of incoming students with current SSU students.

12. Work collaboratively with regional partnerships to enhance the curriculum to meet the needs of the SSU business community.

13. Increase area employers' participation in program Advisory groups.

There is also interest in enhancing communications and connections with SSU alumni. Alumni who are local can be used as mentors, and information from alumni can be used to help gauge how well SSU is doing with transitions for their students to the workforce.

- 14. Strengthen academic and programmatic offerings through enhanced communication with alumni.**
- 15. Regularly survey alumni to assess the nexus between their SSU education and their current jobs and career.**

APPENDIX

Exhibit 3. Prioritization of SSU Student Success Strategies

	PRIORITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION		
	High	Medium	Low
DATA, ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNICATIONS <i>(Page 4)</i>	1. Move institution goals from a fixed-percentage target to a continuous improvement target 2. SSU shall conduct a full review of all course completion data over the past three academic years to fully understand academic trends. 3. Identify SSU courses with low completion rates. 4. Establish baseline figures for student success, including retention and graduation rates. 5. Implement or improve a campus-wide early alert system 6. Require faculty to provide inputs to the system, such as attendance, in order for the early alert to be productive and accurate.	7. Utilize existing survey tools to design and administer a survey that will aid SSU in identifying new opportunities and program gaps.	8. Begin monitoring and reporting of the Beginning College Survey of Student Satisfaction annually to SSU faculty and administration as part of the retention plan.
RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS <i>(Page 8)</i>	1. Conduct a thorough review of the admissions and registration process with an eye towards improvement for all students, with special focus on SSU's at-risk population. 2. Enforce current admissions policies for incoming students 3. Revise the placement processes to ensure that students are appropriately placed in courses and majors. 4. Continue to work toward a seamless process of admissions so that anxiety and confusion of students and families is reduced. 5. Align the general education outcomes for students		
ACADEMIC SUPPORT <i>(Page 10)</i>	1. Identify students who are at-risk for course completion. 2. Provide targeted supplemental instruction for students in courses with low completion rates. 3. Provide intrusive advising for at-risk students. 4. Institute a First Year Experience Program. 5. Develop and implement student centered supportive services for identified at-risk students including mentorship.	6. Develop specific strategies that target commuter vs. residential students at SSU. 7. Create a First Year Experience course for all students entering SSU.	8. Expand the distance learning opportunities (including blended courses), led by the academic faculty with support of administration, that are targeted to increasing course completion. 9. Develop alternative time frameworks and formats for courses, i.e., 3-year degree completion programs.
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION <i>(Page 13)</i>	1. Bring all developmental courses in to one place on campus (University College). 2. Implement best practices of developmental courses into SSU courses. 3. Ensure that faculty are integrated into the process. 4. Review the scheduling process of students with developmental courses. 5. Revise policies for students who fail out of developmental courses multiple times.		

Exhibit 4. Prioritization of SSU Student Success Strategies (continued)

	PRIORITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION		
	High	Medium	Low
ADVISING <i>(Page 14)</i>	1. Improve the selection and training process for advisors. 2. Utilize data in the advising process so that students understand what success AND failure look like at SSU. 3. Make the advising process far more proactive for students and ensure that it occurs as early as possible. 4. Entrench social advising within the academic advising process, or have separate advisors to deal with non-cognitive/non-academic issues.	5. Design or purchase a tracking system in order to track advising and academic progress for students. 6. Develop a communication plan to share with students and parents upon matriculation on cost of not completing degree in a timely manner.	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT <i>(Page 17)</i>	1. Enhance professional development focus on pedagogy for instructional staff 2. Provide forums and workshops for staff regarding student retention, persistence, and success.		
PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIVES <i>(Page 17)</i>	1. Provide districts with data on the performance of their graduates at SSU. 2. Work with districts to align the common core curriculum with college readiness expectations. 3. Work with local high schools and community organizations to ensure students are prepared and complete ACT/SAT admissions exams.	4. Develop collaborative improvement plans with key regional secondary schools to reduce incoming SSU student remediation rates. 5. Identify existing gaps between content taught in high schools and college readiness expectations in English, language arts, and mathematics. 6. Work to align high school curriculum and college placement expectations. 7. Continue to evolve the teacher preparation, induction, and professional development programs based on input from SLAP institutions. 8. Continue to offer and expand dual credit offerings, PSEOP, and support for AP courses. 9. Build upon existing partnerships and create new opportunities for student internship placements. 10. Increase the number of clinical, internship, and field experience opportunities.	11. Devise a strategy to provide mentoring of incoming students with current SSU students. 12. Work collaboratively with regional partnerships to enhance the curriculum to meet the needs of our business community. 13. Increase area employers' participation in program Advisory groups. 14. Strengthen academic and programmatic offerings through enhanced communication with alumni. 15. Regularly survey alumni to assess the nexus between their SSU education and their current jobs and career.