Emerging Themes from Departmental/Unit Meetings
Strategic Planning Content Analysis
South Dakota State University
May 31, 2012

From February 17, 2012 through March 30, 2012, South Dakota State University’s President, Provost and members of the Strategic Planning Leadership Council met in one-hour sessions with forty-two academic departments and support units throughout campus. At each session, a representative of the unit gave a short introduction to the department’s accomplishments over the past five years and an overview of its vision for the future. The remainder of each hour was spent in an open conversation covering topics the departmental members wished to pursue. Notes from these sessions and the presentations were preserved. A Content Analysis Team was appointed (Nicole Ackman, Xiangming Guan, Jaime Nolan-Andrino, Marysz Rames, Anthony Sutton, and Kristi Tornquist) to review all of the input and to summarize the conversations into thematic categories. The Content Analysis Team identified thirteen broad themes and wrote brief summaries for each. Content included in the themes emerged during multiple department/unit conversations. It should be noted that these thematic groupings are not monolithic structures/silos. Rather, the Content Analysis Team believes the themes are overlapping and dynamic; they appear below in no specific order.

Undergraduate Enrollment, Education and Support Services: SDSU has a long history of excellent undergraduate education and of serving as a gateway of opportunity by providing access for students in the State and region. SDSU values a diverse, healthy, and engaged student body as evidenced by course attendance, peer mentoring and tutoring, undergraduate research experiences, campus and community engagement, and participation in internships, athletics, and student organizations. In the next five years, we need to support problem-based, active, and transformational learning opportunities; balance online, off-campus and on-campus course delivery; and provide instruction and services that support targeted growth and student success. Excellence is demonstrated by consistently reaching our recruitment, retention, and graduation goals as well as through the employment and educational placement of our graduates.

Graduate Enrollment, Education and Support Services: SDSU has a variety of graduate programs and an expanding emphasis on doctoral programs. SDSU’s graduate education is closely aligned with areas of research emphasis and is affiliated with disciplines reflecting our land grant history. SDSU values inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary graduate education, well-resourced programs, targeted growth, and exceptional student/faculty partnerships. In the next five years, we need to focus and invest in quality graduate programs that most closely align with the University’s mission and are competitive in recruiting outstanding students and faculty. Excellence is achieved when the importance of graduate education is visibly reflected in the University culture.
**Research/Scholarship/Creative Activities**: SDSU, as a land-grant institution, has historically placed an emphasis on research that improves the wellbeing of citizens. In recent years, the University’s investment in research has been expanding. SDSU values scholarship that furthers the physical, environmental, economic, and cultural welfare of the region, nation, and world. In the next five years, we need to provide appropriate support, structures, and services to expand SDSU’s capacity for research, scholarship, and creative activity. Important to this work will be focusing the research agenda of the university, clearly communicating expectations, balancing research investments with the teaching and service roles of the university, and securing external grants and funding. Excellence is achieved when the research reputation of the university commands the highest distinction specific to each discipline.

**Service**: As a land grant institution, SDSU has a historical and firmly held commitment to outreach, service, and extension efforts. The University values the diffusion of actionable research and practice conducted by its students, faculty, and staff. In the next five years, we need to focus our outreach efforts to highlight areas of emphasis and strength, particularly those that cross disciplines. Extension has a crucial role to play in service delivery as do service learning, research transfer, lectures, artistic performances and exhibits. Excellence is demonstrated by a widely held understanding among South Dakota citizens of the numerous contributions SDSU makes to their welfare, and national recognition of the University’s contributions to the betterment of the country and world.

**Diversity**: SDSU, as a microcosm of the State, has been a fairly homogenous community. We recognize that creating a more inclusive environment is an area of opportunity and tension for the University, the region, and South Dakota. SDSU values the contributions and diverse perspectives of people from all walks of life. In the next five years, we need to find ways to further develop our capacity for diversity/inclusion by recruiting and retaining faculty, students, and staff from underrepresented communities; fostering an inclusive campus climate; and developing impactful outreach efforts. Excellence is indicated by the presence of an infrastructure that supports diversity in all of its complexity and is reflected by a more diverse university community.

**Utilizing Resources**: The University has consistently sought to grow the resources necessary to cultivate our teaching, research, and service missions and has invested these resources to provide the best educational experiences and support for students, faculty, staff, and the State of South Dakota. SDSU values a well-managed fiscal environment; excellent employees; appropriate learning and research spaces; student-focused support services; and the flexibility to invest in new and emerging technologies, practices, and research agendas. In the next five years, we need to focus on aligning authority and responsibility for resources to allow units to be successful in reaching their goals. We also need to strive to creatively balance the tension between new aspirations and the support for existing programs and services. Excellence is achieved when resource allocations are aligned with university priorities and unit goals.
Securing Resources: The resource base for higher education in South Dakota has shifted from a State-supported model to one that is primarily funded by tuition and private dollars. In recent years, the pool of federal grant funding has also been declining. Despite these fiscal challenges, SDSU values retaining a reasonable tuition and fee structure to ensure access to higher education for undergraduate and graduate students. Furthermore, maintaining and expanding research functions through increased support from private donors and corporate entities is of utmost importance. In the next five years, we need to better align ourselves with corporate partners and strengthen our relationship with the University Foundation. We also need to continue to work with the State of South Dakota, stakeholders and constituency groups to secure the resources necessary to safeguard continued academic quality. In particular, we seek to attract resources to support faculty endowments and student scholarships. Excellence is achieved when the University has a stable and diversified set of funding sources to support the attainment of University goals.

Academic Programs: SDSU has a distinguished history of offering a wide variety of academic programs, utilizing traditional and distance delivery methods, which serve the citizens of the State and region. As a University we value program accreditations, inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary courses and structures, and collaboration across University departments and with private sector partners. In the next five years, we need to continue to strive to support excellence in teaching, learning, and research through the recruitment of outstanding faculty while also investing resources in existing faculty and staff. In addition, we need to strengthen both on-campus and off-campus collaborative relationships while continuing to look for new opportunities for partnerships. The excellence of academic programs is evinced through accreditations, successful faculty recruitment and retention, certification results, internship placements, and graduation rates.

Focus and Alignment: As an established institution, SDSU has a commitment to the various components of a well-rounded land-grant university. There is an understanding that the various parts of the University, working together as a whole, are integral to SDSU’s overall success. SDSU values and understands that having each department be balanced, right-sized, and aligned with the University’s mission is crucial to achieving not only departmental, but also University goals. In the next five years, we need to continue to clarify expectations for students and faculty in the areas of outreach, research, teaching and learning, creative work, technology, and university priorities. Achieving excellence is dependent on cultivating and maintaining synergistic relationships in all parts of the University, understanding that in a vibrant university this is constantly being refined.

Transparency and Consistency: Communication at SDSU continues to improve and is important to faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, and the community. SDSU values shared governance and student, alumni, employee, and citizen input. In the next five years, we need to further develop clear communication channels and processes that will positively impact issues of connectivity and enhance interactions across the University. Additionally, we need to continue to develop a culture of responsiveness in which questions are welcomed and answers can be readily obtained. Excellence is achieved when the various university stakeholders value and respect one another and understand their respective roles in contributing to the success of the university.
Reputation and Competitiveness: SDSU has enjoyed a positive national reputation, particularly with those programs and structures most closely allied with the traditional land-grant mission. While the avenues to increase visibility vary across disciplines, the University values and is committed to supporting these efforts throughout the institution. In the next five years, we need to strive to maintain and improve the University’s reputation and competitiveness through increased visibility of faculty and students in graduate and undergraduate research and creative work. Excellence will be evident through significant dissemination of scholarship, research, and creative work at the regional, national, and international levels; by invitations to present, exhibit, or perform at national and international venues; and by increased collaboration with similar institutions and programs.

Administrative support structures: SDSU, the Board of Regents, and the State of South Dakota have numerous administrative support structures in place to assist students, faculty, and staff. In today’s educational climate, superior customer service is a high priority. SDSU values a culture of empowerment and providing the best support and service to students, faculty, staff, and constituency groups. In the next five years, we need to continue our efforts to make policies and procedures transparent and easily accessible while simultaneously fostering an attitude of facilitation and friendliness among all groups. While working within established parameters of the various providers, SDSU is committed to creatively meeting the needs of students, faculty and staff and also clearly communicating information necessary for a productive, efficient, and healthy educational environment. Administrative support structures should continue to strive for new ways to simplify and expedite academic experiences for students and faculty. Excellence is achieved when working with support structures is a seamless process in which mutual respect is the standard and a collegial environment is sustained.

External Stakeholders and Influences: SDSU has traditionally fostered positive relationships with the Brookings community; the University Centers in Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Rapid City; and the rest of the State of South Dakota. The University values these partnerships as well as its relationships with parents, alumni, donors, and corporate entities. In the next five years, we need to increase our collaborative efforts in the areas of planning, economic growth, and quality of life for our stakeholders. We will continue to improve communication and relationships with parents, donors, and alumni to develop an even stronger culture of shared achievement and accomplishment. Clarity of communication and mission is and continues to be critical to the institution’s relationship with legislators and corporate partners. Excellence is demonstrated by the degree to which stakeholders contribute to and share in the success of the institutional mission.
Specific areas for improvement: These items were too detailed to be considered as their own thematic category but were mentioned with enough frequency that the Content Analysis Team felt they should be captured and shared with the larger community.

- Hiring processes and salaries for post-docs
- Orientation for new graduate students
- Selective recruitment of graduate students
- Graduate assistant insurance, stipends and tuition waivers
- Affordable housing for graduate students
- Career services for students
- Scholarships for students
- Student engagement opportunities
- Tutoring services
- Articulation agreements with two-year institutions
- Internships
- Library collections
- Professional development opportunities for employees
- Facilities, including lab space, updated classrooms, co-location of spaces, office spaces, accessibility
- Competitive salaries and conditions to allow us to attract students and employees
- Start-up packages
- Student travel funding
- Recruitment of underrepresented groups – needs vary by department/unit
- 2+2 programs with international students and tribal colleges
- English as a Second Language (ESL)