Summary
As a part of the strategic planning efforts at South Dakota State University, the Strategic Planning Leadership Council hosted a series of listening sessions across the state in May 2012. These events were held at nine locations statewide plus additional information gathering sessions were conducted with the SDSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and the SDSU Foundation Council of Trustees. The questions, concerns and comments expressed at the sessions generally aligned under three broad themes: Students/Faculty, Research, and Outreach/Service. Of these themes, student issues were the most common topic brought up by attendees. They included enrollment levels, student retention, K-12 academic preparation, tuition and fees, placement, and veteran’s needs. Second, concerns were expressed regarding funding and staff reductions in extension and research programs, loss of testing lab services, OSHA consultation needs, marketing assistance for commodity groups, and maintaining and building state-wide partnerships. Attendees remarked about the need for marketing and promotion of our athletic programs, SDSU services and faculty talent, and in recruiting well-prepared, high quality students. Lastly, questions were fielded from audiences on research and development opportunities, balancing the need for more extramural funding with other faculty responsibilities, and positioning SDSU regionally and nationally. It is important to note that a consistent subtext was heard in all the sessions: there is great pride in what SDSU has accomplished but our constituents have expectations for measurable results in the future.

Overview and Session Format
To engage the state citizenry in the process, there were Strategic Planning Listening Sessions held at nine geographically dispersed locations - SDSU’s eight Regional Extension Centers as well as in Brookings. The sites are listed in chronological order of presentation: Mitchell, Winner, Pierre, Lemmon, Sioux Falls, Watertown, Aberdeen, Rapid City, and Brookings. These listening sessions were publicized in local newspapers and on the SDSU website to encourage public participation. The format of each session was consistent, with a short, opening presentation that described the current state of SDSU, the strategic planning process, broad goals for the institution, and the timeline. The sessions were approximately two hours in length, depending on discussion, and were attended by as few as 12 people in Mitchell to more than 30 at Lemmon and Sioux Falls. Special sessions were also held with the SDSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and the SDSU Foundation Council of Trustees to solicit input from these affiliated constituent groups.

Theme One: Students & Faculty
Listening session participants from across the state were genuinely concerned about the increasing costs of college, specifically the perceived value versus actual value that a degree from SDSU has for students. Likewise, the need for remedial work incoming students must often undertake and the impact on SDSU resources was voiced.

Placement after graduation, slowing or reversing the ‘brain drain’, and assuring that SDSU is offering globally competitive degrees were primarily West River session themes. The rising cost of tuition, fees, and associated student loans, transfer and articulation, inadequate K-12 preparation (response to remedial work often necessary for incoming students), availability of scholarships, non-competitive salaries and the impact on faculty retention, and veterans’ special needs were recurring East River session themes.
West River session themes also touched on concerns about tuition and fee expenses rising as other traditional revenue streams continue to shrink; developing, growing, and marketing SDSU distance education opportunities; increasing student recruitment from rural communities; advising and support for veterans with GI Bill educational benefits; and, minimizing instructor language barriers particularly for core science courses.

Generally, the attendees expressed satisfaction with the quality of SDSU academic programs but realize this is related to how well students are prepared for college, the effectiveness of the faculty to engage students and be relevant, and that we assure students will be competitive and have adequate discipline employment opportunities.

**Theme Two: Research**

In the area of research, listening session participants asked questions or made comments about maintaining a societal focus and scientific objectivity in the face of increasing private research funds and decreasing public funds; asking if there are opportunities for R&D partnerships with private sector companies because research and extension add economic value to SD and both require adequate funding; concerns about where Ag Research is going after the cuts of the previous two years; and, as more private funding is needed, how does SDSU stay unbiased.

The cuts to Extension and within the College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences were emphasized concerns, particularly the impact of those cuts on future research and outreach. The value of Ag research in the areas of water systems, forage, insect and other controls, farm management and best management practices, and bio-fuels was noted and, specifically, the privilege of working with Ag researchers was expressed.

**Theme Three: Outreach & Service**

Comments and questions in the listening sessions had parallel themes, particularly for the Ag sector. Specific topics included: budget cuts that affected Extension were still a hot issue; the restructuring of Extension and how success would be measured; need for continued support for extension; the BLS3 lab, requests for satellite ag or vet med programs in Winner or Lemmon; the iGrow website needed clarification and advertising; and 4-H and Extension need a fixed structure. Helpful suggestions included looking into partnerships between the U.S. Forestry Service and SDSU, lobbying state government to obtain a special excise tax similar to tourism, and the need for better marketing of SDSU services and projects that benefit the state.

Other general comments and questions on these topics related to outreach and service included: that Engineering Extension (OSHA consultation) was a good service that is needed across the state; partnerships between healthcare providers and SDSU are important for the future; an adult retirement community strategy in Brookings may be an opportunity for SDSU outreach; rural communities would benefit from SDSU programs, and outreach to the middle/poverty class is important. Lastly, better communication of the services, projects, and outreach efforts SDSU has provided to the state is needed.