

DESTINATION 2025



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Message from the President

It is with pride and a purpose-driven commitment that I share with you ***Destination 2025***, South Florida State College's strategic plan. This plan considers SFSC's strengths, values, and capabilities while providing direction for future initiatives and priorities focused on enhancing programs and services. The plan's development was comprehensive, inclusive, and inspired by SFSC's vision statement: to become a globally aware academic destination driving regional transformation through innovative collaboration. ***Destination 2025*** represents the collective efforts of many members of the college community, including members of the SFSC District Board of Trustees, full- and part-time members of the faculty, staff, and administration, advisory committee members, and constituents of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties.

Destination 2025 has six equally important strategic initiatives, as follows:

- Develop exemplary student services programs that support student success
- Formulate responsive programs that meet community needs
- Provide students with an engaging learning experience within and beyond the classroom
- Create innovative joint ventures and partnerships that drive regional economic growth
- Develop and implement diverse strategies that will increase funding needed to support institutional initiatives
- Provide programs and resources that inspire employee growth/development

Each strategic initiative contains various measurable goals that provide a clear framework for ongoing evaluation of progress.

To meet the strategic initiatives and goals put forth in ***Destination 2025***, the President's Leader Team assumes responsibility for evaluating



and documenting progress and, if necessary, recommending changes. The plan follows a rolling cycle that continually looks ahead over a five-year period and is updated annually as goals are attained and new goals are envisioned.

It is an honor to present to you ***Destination 2025***, with gratitude and hope for the opportunity to serve and make a lasting impact in the lives of our students. We pledge to maintain our commitment to providing affordable, accessible, and world-class delivery of curriculum content to the residents of the tri-county district.

Serving with pleasure,

Thomas C. Leitzel, Ph.D.
President



Core Institutional Values

The attributes that guide our behavior as we pursue our vision are:

Integrity

We encourage the free exchange of ideas in an environment that embraces honesty, fairness, personal responsibility, and ethical leadership.

Service

We actively seek opportunities to enhance achievement and success in our local and world communities.

Community

We embrace cultural diversity, inclusiveness, collaboration, mutual respect, responsive and productive partnerships, and the sharing of resources.

Learning

We are committed to providing opportunities for students and staff to succeed in a highly competitive environment so that they can become effective lifelong learners.

Excellence

We seek to provide high-quality, innovative, and flexible teaching and learning opportunities in a learning-centered environment.

Accountability

We value personal and institutional ownership through integrated planning and assessment of all programs.

Responsibility

We honor our commitments in all initiatives and leadership endeavors as well as promote environmental stewardship.

Vision

South Florida State College will become ... a globally aware academic destination driving regional transformation through innovative collaboration.

Mission

South Florida State College is an open-access, higher education institution dedicated to providing a learning-centered environment through quality programs, training, and services. Working in partnerships with organizations and communities, the College provides leadership and a comprehensive range of opportunities for the educational, cultural, and economic development of the service district.

The College assists the people of its service district (DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties) regardless of economic, social, or educational background to achieve success in

- completing an associate degree in preparation for pursuing a baccalaureate or other professional degree or credential;
- completing a baccalaureate degree, associate degree, or certificate related to career and technical preparation to enter the workforce or to improve career circumstances;
- completing college preparatory programs of study including those leading to the high school diploma;
- obtaining basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and citizenship to prosper as a contributing member of society;
- gaining personal, cultural, and global awareness, appreciation, and understanding needed in a complex contemporary society;
- pursuing advanced academic preparation and credentials available through partnerships with colleges and universities; and
- participating in the social, cultural, environmental, and economic development of the communities served by the College.

We believe in the worth of each of our students and, through all of our educational programs and services, we seek to develop human potential and to create brighter futures.



Six Pillars of Excellence



Leadership

Driving regional transformation



Relevance

Keeping local focus on the global pulse



Destination

Premier academic programs that attract engaged learners



Partnership

Accelerating change through bold collaboration



Technology

Pushing the envelope of academic enterprise



Quality

Personalized education via personal excellence

Planning Assumptions

These assumptions operationally define SFSC's present and future environment.

The South Florida State College district, comprised of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties, has unique demographics, resources, and needs. The planning assumptions listed below, developed internally and externally, pertain to the College service area as a whole.

1 The demand for higher education will increase as individuals seek to improve their circumstances in an ever-changing world.

- a. College enrollments typically respond inversely to economic cycles and this cycle will continue—people tend to work more when the economy is good and continue their education when work is less available.
- b. Economic projections suggest that DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties will trail the state's economic growth.
- c. Postsecondary students are more likely to attend multiple institutions before earning a degree. Students are becoming increasingly mobile and more apt to pursue non-traditional degree paths.
- d. Public support for community colleges is strong. Findings from a 2019 survey conducted by the thinktank New America suggest that over 86% of Americans believe public community colleges “contribute to a strong American workforce.”
- e. State colleges serve as a major facilitator of baccalaureate attainment. Research conducted by the National Student Clearinghouse revealed that students transferring to a four-year institution with a two-year degree or certificate were more likely to earn a baccalaureate degree than students without such academic credentials.
- f. The demand for job retraining, industry certification, upgrading employability skills, and lifelong learning will increase in the highly competitive global economy.
- g. Education and training beyond high school will increase in importance for individuals seeking high-demand, fast-growing, and new jobs in our economy. Demand for employment will increase in careers related to science, health care, advanced manufacturing, information technology, business, and emerging industries.



- h.** The College will remain the primary institution for postsecondary educational opportunities in its service district.
- i.** Time limitations and family/work obligations will influence students to enroll in distance learning classes and/or classes at sites closest to their homes and workplaces.
- j.** Job growth and development will require qualified applicants to display critical thinking and “soft skill” competencies.
- k.** Nationally and statewide, fewer high school graduates are financially and academically prepared for post-secondary education. Colleges must develop effective developmental education programs to address this growing population.
- l.** Alternative methods of documenting content mastery will continue to accelerate in college programs (e.g., credit for work/life experience).
- m.** The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance for colleges to adapt quickly to changing environments.



2 Political, environmental, educational, economic, and demographic characteristics of each of the three counties in our rural service district are diverse and unique.

- a.** Average per capita income of the service district will remain much lower than state or national averages. This is due in some part to large numbers of retirees in Highlands County and depressed economic circumstances with low-wage and low-skill jobs throughout the district.
- b.** With the increasing number of retirees impacting the national and local economy, a sizable and increasing proportion of an older age and retiree population demands a more service-related economy with a high demand for medical, retail, and age-appropriate recreational and leisure opportunities.
- c.** Hispanic enrollments across all academic programs at SFSC have grown steadily since 2001. Hispanic students presently comprise approximately 40% of the College’s overall student population and will continue to rise.
- d.** Florida’s population growth rate will continue to increase as a result of the state’s economic growth.
- e.** High school completion rates in the College’s service area will continue to fall below state and national averages.
- f.** Qualified adjunct faculty in many disciplines in our service district, particularly in DeSoto and Hardee counties, will remain scarce.

3

Future students will be increasingly diverse in their background, academic preparation, and demand for educational services.

- a.** Increasing numbers of under-prepared students, including older adults and minorities needing academic intervention and remediation, are expected.
- b.** The proportion of first-generation college students will remain high.
- c.** Statewide and local initiatives will continue to focus on collaborative intervention to decrease the number of high school students entering college with developmental education needs.
- d.** College students will need an increasing variety of day/time/modality offerings.
- e.** Colleges will increasingly adopt innovative career pathway initiatives to minimize time to completion and guide students through their academic programs



4

State and community colleges have a responsibility and role in strengthening economic development within their service area.

- a.** Economic growth and recovery of a region will remain highly dependent on strong collaborations between local communities, economic development agencies, and various public/private organizations such as universities, state and community colleges, school districts, and business and industry.
- b.** State and community college-industry partnerships support alignment between academic credentials and job requirements. Cultivating successful partnerships is recognized as an effective way to prepare and train the local workforce for emerging job opportunities.
- c.** The College will provide leadership and help create opportunities to facilitate innovation and economic development in the communities it serves.
- d.** Degrees to jobs will remain a high priority of the governor and the legislative body.

5

Workforce education and training as well as the demand for lifelong learning will continue to be a major focus of the College.

- a. Economic conditions and economic development initiatives may require new or modified educational programs and training.
- b. Agriculture, retail, and health care are economic mainstays of DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties.
- c. Workforce projections suggest that industries in the College's service area with the greatest projected employment growth will include construction and health care services.
- d. Because of its central location and the abundance of available land, water, and natural resources, the service district should offer an opportunity for emerging industries, such as alternative energy, biosciences, and medical services.
- e. Employees will need to continue their career and professional development to keep pace with and anticipate emerging technologies and employability skills.
- f. There will be a growing emphasis on "on-the-job" experiences and training opportunities (e.g., co-ops, apprenticeships, and internships).
- g. Short-term stackable certificates will continue to gain in popularity among law and policy makers, employers, and colleges across the country.



6

State and community colleges will continue to provide local communities with cultural enrichment, personal development, and non-academic professional growth opportunities.

- a. As new entertainment venues open, there will be stronger competition for audience members.
- b. Arts education in our service district public schools will continue to increase, creating a need to establish more programs for school-aged youth.

7

Technology increasingly influences working, learning, and daily living.

- a. Generational influences on learning with technology differ and will require changes in the delivery of educational and student services.
- b. The demand for asynchronous and online learning opportunities for students will continue to increase.
- c. Technology competence will continue to be required in most, if not all, workplaces.
- d. As a result of COVID-19, the use of asynchronous and distance learning modalities will continue to increase as their educational viability has become more common and accepted.
- e. SFSC will be required to continually upgrade and enhance technology. Technology enhanced workflow automation solutions will be explored to reduce costs, bolster employee productivity, and improve services provided to students.
- f. Access to high speed, broadband internet access will remain unavailable in many rural areas.



8

Funding of higher education will remain limited from traditional state and federal sources.

- a. Pressure will continue to increase the need to find alternative funding sources.
- b. The aggressive pursuit of public and private grants will be necessary to supplement traditional funding of the College.
- c. Private fundraising efforts through the College's programs and the SFSC Foundation will grow in importance to assist students by removing financial barriers and to supplement funding for various college initiatives and operations.
- d. Creating and maintaining strong private and public partnerships to share and conserve limited resources will be a continuing necessity.
- e. SFSC will continue to build its unrestricted endowment.
- f. Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funding appropriations to the Florida College System will remain limited and highly competitive.
- g. Industry certifications will grow in importance from a funding perspective.



9 Demands for institutional accountability and effectiveness will continue to increase.

- a. Policy makers and policy advocates at the state and national level will continue to emphasize accountability and monitor performance-based funding for colleges. The Florida College System budget model will focus on key accountability measures to include student success indicators (completion and retention rates) and graduate outcomes (job placement, continuing education, and entry level wages). Dual enrollment participation and enrollment growth will be major components of this model.
- b. SFSC will need to embrace innovation and continuous quality improvement efforts in academic and administrative support programs and services.
- c. Information gathering and reporting will continue to be a major requirement of the College to monitor continuous improvement, cost-effectiveness, and student progress and success.
- d. Accrediting agency expectations will require more documented evidence of continuous quality improvement achievements.
- e. College completion will continue to be emphasized through enhanced student success, retention, and placement initiatives.
- f. There will be a need for greater advocacy or lobbying efforts directed toward legislative initiatives that directly impact SFSC.
- g. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020), colleges are experiencing declining enrollments among black students. Consequently, colleges must use data and research to identify practices that will address this concerning trend.

Strategic Initiatives and Goals

The vision statement is supported by six “pillars of excellence”: Leadership, Relevance, Destination, Partnership, Technology, and Quality. Pillars of excellence serve as broad, overarching themes and provide context to the plan’s strategic initiatives, which symbolize major thrusts SFSC will pursue to achieve its collective vision. Strategic initiatives are long-term (three to five years) and serve to provide focus for more specific goals. Goals, in contrast to initiatives, are short-term (e.g., two to three years); they represent specific steps or building blocks needed to accomplish a strategic initiative.

1 Develop Exemplary Student Services Programs that Support Student Success



- a. Provide extensive academic and career advising opportunities for all students by:
 - 1. Expanding student tutoring services to include enhanced online and face-to-face tutoring at all College locations
 - 2. Expanding advising services by assigning program-specific faculty advisors
- b. Expand the Beacon Early Alert System to include a case management model of service delivery
- c. Develop and implement a comprehensive financial aid and admissions communication plan to ensure that students are aware of documents needed to complete applications and to inform them when documents are received and processed
- d. Implement a web-based class schedule planning solution for use by students and counselors/advisors
- e. Embed employability skills in college-level coursework by implementing 5G Power Skills across the curriculum
- f. Implement the institution’s Quality Enhancement Plan

2 Formulate Responsive Programs that Meet Community Needs



- a. Develop initiatives to include pathway connections for middle/high school students interested in enrolling at SFSC
- b. Establish a summer theatre camp
- c. Establish new educational partnerships that support SFSC programs
- d. Increase the number of evening and weekend course offerings

3

Provide Students with an Engaging Learning Experience Within and Beyond the Classroom



- a. Integrate undergraduate research at the course level
- b. Offer research colloquia with interdisciplinary participation during fall and spring terms
- c. Infuse service learning throughout the curriculum
- d. Improve internet/network connectivity at the campuses/centers
- e. Partner with the Florida LambdaRail (FLR) to increase the College's commodity internet service capacity
- f. Enhance students' critical thinking, academic writing, and artistic skills outside the classroom through a voluntary cultural literacy program

4

Create Innovative Programs and Partnerships that Drive Regional Economic Growth and Respond to Sector Strategies



- a. Create centers of excellence:
 1. Construction Institute aimed at providing skill-based training in the construction trades
 2. Advanced Technology Center focusing on e-Defense
- b. Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify innovative programs that enhance the region to capitalize on growth opportunities

5

Develop and Implement Diverse Strategies that will Increase Funding Needed to Support Institutional Initiatives



- a. Explore funding opportunities in the development of a collaborative clinical immersion center for Health Sciences
- b. Identify non-traditional funding sources in meeting critical funding needs of the College
- c. Explore opportunities to construct a community conference center on the Highlands Campus
- d. Explore options for alternative student housing

6

Provide Programs and Resources that Inspire Employee Growth/Development



- a. Enhance employee recognition for service, performance, and advancement
- b. Implement a formal employee mentorship program that will "onboard" new hires and improve their success through guidance, support, and collaboration opportunities
- c. Offer ongoing and comprehensive professional development opportunities for all employees



DESTINATION 2025



southflorida.edu

DeSoto Campus

2251 N.E. Turner Avenue
Arcadia, FL 34266

Highlands Campus

600 West College Drive
Avon Park, FL 33825

Hardee Campus

2968 U.S. 17 North
Bowling Green, FL 33834

Lake Placid Center

500 E. Interlake Boulevard
Lake Placid, FL 33852

