



DESTINATION 2027

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027





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Message from the President

It is with pride and a purpose-driven commitment that I share with you ***Destination 2027***, 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 2027*** 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 2027 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 programs, partnerships, and funding opportunities that drive regional economic growth and respond to sector strategies
- Provide programs and resources that inspire employee growth/development
- Enhance the College's technology infrastructure and expand employee use of improved technology resources

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 2027***, 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 2027***, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas C. Leitzel".

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.

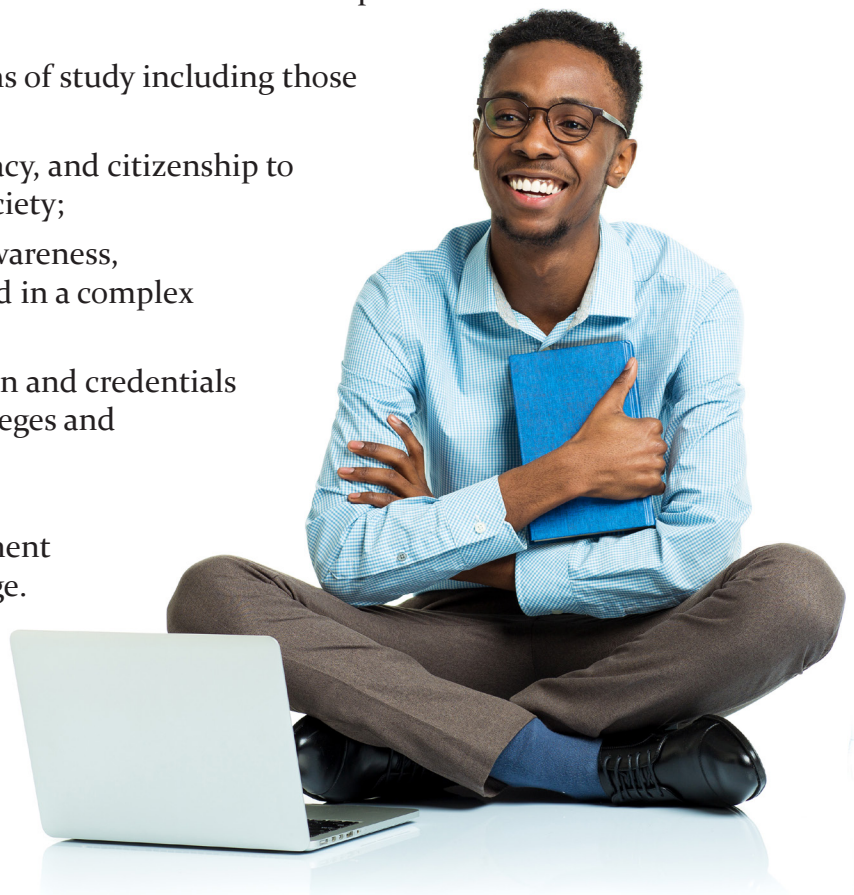
Mission

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.



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.

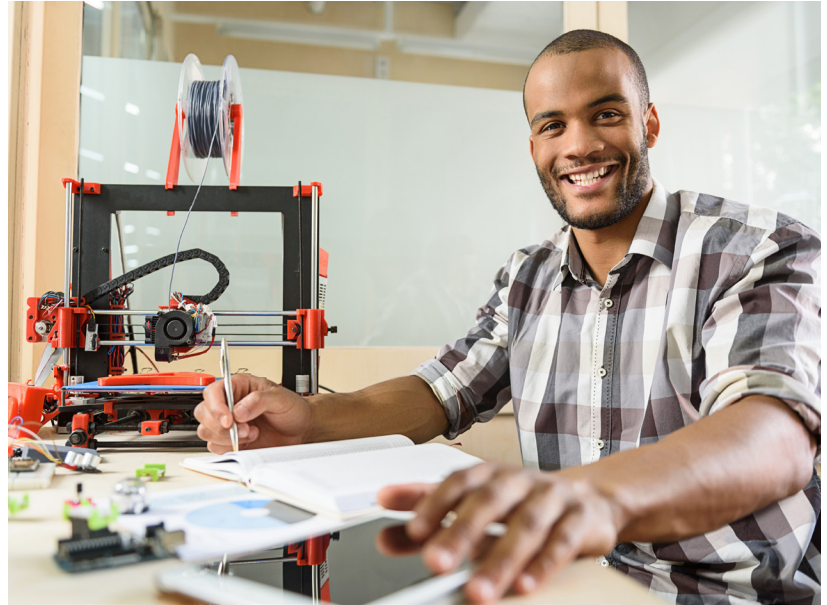
- a.** Economic projections suggest that DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties will trail the state's economic growth.
- b.** State colleges serve as major facilitators of baccalaureate attainment. Research conducted by the National Student Clearinghouse revealed that students transferring to a four-year institution with a two-year degree or certificate were more likely to earn baccalaureate degrees than students without such academic credentials.
- c.** The demand for job retraining, industry certification, upgrading employability skills, and lifelong learning will increase in the highly competitive global economy.
- d.** 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, public safety, advanced manufacturing, information technology, business, and emerging industries.
- e.** 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.
- f.** Job growth and development will require qualified applicants to display critical thinking and "soft skill" competencies.
- g.** Nationally and statewide, fewer high school graduates are financially and academically prepared for postsecondary education. Colleges must develop effective support programs to address this growing population.
- h.** Alternative methods of documenting content mastery will continue to accelerate in college programs (e.g., credit for work/life experience).



- i. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance for colleges to adapt quickly to changing environments and respond promptly to student needs. National results of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2021) revealed that 34% of students “described their personal financial situation as worse than it was before than the pandemic.” Similarly, a large percentage (23%) of students indicated “they were struggling to pay for college as a result of COVID-19.”

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 due in some part to the large number 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 recreational/leisure opportunities.
- c. Florida’s population growth rate will continue to increase as a result of the state’s economic growth.
- d. High school completion rates in the College’s service area will continue to fall below state and national averages.
- e. Qualified adjunct faculty in many disciplines within our service district, particularly in DeSoto and Hardee counties, will remain scarce.
- f. Maintaining ties to economic development offices is critical as the College creates responsive programs to attract and retain businesses.



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. 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.
- c. Flexible educational models are regarded as the future of higher education; students will need an increasing variety of day/time/modality offerings.
- d. Colleges are adopting innovative career pathway initiatives to minimize time to completion and guide students through their academic programs.
- e. As more students pursue online and flexible learning opportunities, Colleges must seek ways to increase student engagement. Research shows that student engagement is tied to desired educational outcomes such as increased learning, persistence in college, and graduation (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2021).



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 for 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 educational and financial investment 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.
- h. There is a movement at the federal level to fund short-term, workforce training leading to certified industry certifications.
- i. In response to employer demand, colleges are embedding "soft skills" training into the curriculum.



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. The College will establish more arts education opportunities for school-aged youth in response to decreasing arts education in its service district public schools.

- c. In response to aging cultural arts patrons, efforts will be made to attract a new patron base to include younger audience members.
- d. The College will provide in-person and virtual visual arts programs and exhibits for students, art and classroom teachers, and the general public.



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 Hyflex (or Hybrid Flexible) classroom technologies will continue to be a mainstay delivery mechanism.
- e. Advances in technology have caused digital disruptions in higher education. SFSC will be required to continually upgrade and enhance technology used by both students and employees.
- f. Technology enhanced workflow automation solutions will be explored to reduce costs, bolster employee productivity, and improve services provided to students.
- g. Access to high-speed, broadband internet access will remain unavailable in many rural areas.





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

- 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. The SFSC Foundation 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. Data analysis, learning analytics, and reporting will continue to be a major requirement of the College to monitor continuous improvement, cost-effectiveness, and student progress and success.
- c. Accrediting agency expectations will require more documented evidence of continuous quality improvement achievements.
- d. College completion will continue to be emphasized through enhanced student success, retention, and placement initiatives.
- e. There will be a need for greater advocacy or lobbying efforts directed toward legislative initiatives that directly impact SFSC.
- f. Changes to institutional accreditation will require a diligent adaptation to different compliance criteria.
- g. Physical facilities will need to change due to shifts in instructional delivery modalities.



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

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 (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. Implement the institution’s Quality Enhancement Plan, *Panther PATHways: Increasing Attainment through Access*
- b. Broaden advising services by assigning program-specific faculty mentors
- c. Expand the College’s Early Alert System to include a case management model of service delivery
- d. 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

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 new educational partnerships that support SFSC programs
- c. Increase the number of evening and weekend course offerings
- d. Align budget allocation with new program development, program review, and operational review.
- e. Establish new healthcare programs to meet community needs
- f. Conduct an analysis of facility utilization and align the College’s master facilities plan with instructional delivery and community needs
- g. Design ongoing vibrant cultural arts programming to appeal to residents of the SFSC service area and visitors

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



- a. Create an Office of Undergraduate Research
- b. Infuse service learning throughout the curriculum
- c. Implement strategies to increase student engagement with the College's academic, cultural, and social support network

4 Create Innovative Programs, Partnerships, and Funding Opportunities that Drive Regional Economic Growth and Respond to Sector Strategies



- a. Create centers of excellence:
 - i. Advanced Technology Center focusing on e-Defense
 - ii. Business Incubation Center
 - iii. Culinary Arts Institute
- b. Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify innovative programs that enhance the region to capitalize on growth opportunities
- c. Explore opportunities to construct a community conference center on the Highlands Campus



5 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



6 Enhance the College's Technology Infrastructure and Expand Employee Use of Improved Technology Resources

- a. Migrate the College's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system Banner® to a Software as a Service (SaaS) environment to improve operations in a remote operations/distance learning environment
- b. Implement a unified communications system

DESTINATION 2027



southflorida.edu

DeSoto Campus

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Arcadia, FL 34266

Hardee Campus

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Bowling Green, FL 33834

Highlands Campus

600 West College Drive
Avon Park, FL 33825

Lake Placid Center

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Lake Placid, FL 33852