

Centers of Strength Strategic ROADMAP

Our Strategic Roadmap... a clear way forward for bringing improved **Academic Alignment** together with **Louisiana** workforce, community, and economic development initiatives.

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Strategic Roadmap for Southern University's Centers of Strength Initiative

Southern University and A&M College

March 2017

OVERVIEW

A clear way forward for Southern University and A&M College to implement its Centers of Strength project, which will align and focus University efforts to maximize economic impact to the State of Louisiana

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Executive Summary

Just as a wise traveler preparing for a journey consults a trustworthy map for directions, leaders of organizations embarking on substantive change benefit from preparing a clear way forward to move from the present to the desired state. This Strategic Roadmap serves such a purpose. It details Southern University's context and needs, identifies a key solution which will involve changes to the organization, and details the route by which Southern can transition itself.

The State of Louisiana sits at a unique juncture in its history. Against a backdrop of budgetary challenges and employment needs, State leaders have united executive, economic development, and academic resources to help citizens achieve higher standards of living. Operating under this leadership, Southern University possesses a unique position and a mandate to lead – showing the way forward in how to ensure Louisiana's academic needs align to the guidance received. Southern is preparing to maximize and focus state resources by creating "Centers of Strength" within the University.

The concept arose from an internal review which empowered leaders to evaluate and propose changes – reviewing standard approaches to find better solutions. Southern realized that not all academic offerings were focused on Louisiana's economic needs and that "stove-piped" disciplines prevented crossflow of information and ideas between faculty, staff and students. By organizing around five Centers – Social Entrepreneurship, Informed Learning, Integrative Sustainability, Digital Innovation and Sustainable Health and Wellness – Southern's stakeholders can achieve increased innovation, rapid adjustment to dynamic workplace requirements, and greater preparation for the Louisiana's need for students with well-rounded backgrounds.

With both a clear understanding of the present situation and the desired objective, this Strategic Roadmap details a clear and actionable plan that shows the key tasks which must be accomplished. First, the roadmap characterizes collaboration, problem-solving and momentum as crucial principles which will guide leadership forward. Three distinct phases of activity are detailed – the current Phase 1 of Advance Preparation, Phase 2 of Laying Crucial Groundwork, and Phase 3 of Implementation and Build-Out. Key tasks within each of these phases are identified and described to allow leadership to prepare the resources needed to accomplish the task.

Achieving progress can be a challenge for any major endeavor, so the Strategic Roadmap next moves into highly actionable recommendations. The Roadmap provides baseline assignment of specific actions to owners and recommends sequencing and a timeline for execution. This portion must be viewed as an initial baseline or "living" document, as execution realities will drive the need for course corrections along the way. To enable ready understanding of the overall timeline involved, an implementation schedule shows each of the key tasks, sequencing, anticipated duration, and areas where simultaneous effort is required.

Together, the elements contained in this document represent the necessary implementation guidance to enable Southern to achieve success as it transitions to its new construct. *"This Strategic Roadmap represents a compelling rationale and clear way forward for Southern University to successfully implement our "Centers of Strength" construct, which will focus and unite our efforts to help lead Louisiana forward."*

Introduction/Overview

This Strategic Roadmap for Southern University and A&M College's Centers of Strength structure represents a clear way forward for bringing improved academic alignment together with Louisiana economic development initiatives. As with any map, a clear understanding of one's present location and desired end state is required prior to undertaking the steps associated with traveling to the destination. A similar approach is used here. The document will establish a clear rationale for action, explain the concept of the Centers and their benefits, provide a roadmap for efforts associated with implementation, detail action items and overall schedules, and quantify the benefits associated with execution of this plan. Building upon this, subsequent business plans for each Center will provide further detail and will nest within this overarching roadmap. As such, it serves as a strategic level blueprint for Southern University to increase its impact on the economy of the state of Louisiana.

The Rationale: A Crucial Season for Louisiana

It is no secret that Louisiana faces a challenging fiscal context. State tax receipts have been negatively impacted by decreased mineral tax collections (due to low oil prices), as well as decreased corporate and sales tax collections (due to constrained economic activity)ⁱ. The state possesses the 4th highest rate of unemployment in the United States, with 130,905 residents seeking employment but currently unable to secure work. This represents 6.1% of the populationⁱⁱ and constitutes a negative family and state-level impact, further depressing economic activity. The most recent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Louisiana shows 0.4% quarterly GDP, placing Louisiana in the bottom quartile of US states as ranked by GDP.ⁱⁱⁱ This decreased economic output has translated into a current budget shortfall for 2017 projected at \$304 million.^{iv} As state leaders have wrestled with addressing multiple years of budget deficits, higher education has experienced repeated significant budget cuts. One of only two major areas without constitutional or statutory budgetary protection^v, Louisiana's higher education system has seen its budget decrease from \$1.5 billion to \$852 million over the last decade,^{vi} a 43.2% decrease.

Against this backdrop, state-funded agencies and entities face a requirement to steward funds to maximize impact. Governor Edwards recently ruled tax increases as off the table and stated, "This isn't easy cuts anymore. They all have consequences. We have to live in the real world."^{vii} With a special legislative session called to discuss means of addressing the current 2017 shortfall, state agencies, including Louisiana's higher education system, must ensure maximum usage of every dollar and identify creative ways to increase the impact to the state with funding provided.

Louisiana does have several factors working in its favor, which if handled correctly, can help the state achieve significant economic growth, address unemployment and increase tax revenue. First, significant integration groundwork has been laid by the



Lake Charles Louisiana Chemical Plant

Governor's stated platform for Louisiana's future, the Louisiana Board of Regents' "Elevate Louisiana" initiative, Louisiana Economic Development, Louisiana Workforce Council, and other initiatives. These efforts have identified undersupplied job needs within Louisiana, specific post-secondary education metrics, and brought a unity of effort between state economic, employment, and job preparation entities. Further, economic opportunities within the business and investment communities portend future economic growth. News reports document emerging possibilities for expansion of existing industries as well as creation of new businesses. Anecdotal examples include Shandong Yuhuang Chemical's \$1.85 billion ethanol plant in Vacherie^{viii}, Venture Global's announced \$8.5 billion Plaquemines Parish liquid natural gas liquefaction plant and terminal^{ix} and the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline, a significant new project that would link Louisiana's refineries with a larger network of pipelines accessing North American oilfields^x (including the recently approved Dakota Access pipeline).^{xi} While specific projects may or may not materialize, the time is right for action to further ensure that the higher education system of Louisiana is aligned correctly to prepare students for jobs across the state and to maximize impact of the funding provided.

Universities possess unique capabilities in empowering economic growth and positively impacting personal income and state-level GDP. The Pew Research Center has found that college-educated adults age 25-34 who are working full time earn \$17,500 more per year than their counterparts with only a high school diploma^{xii}. Further, college graduates are more likely to be employed full-time and are significantly less likely to be unemployed.^{xiii} However, "business as usual" will not accomplish what Louisiana needs, so traditional or heritage academic offerings, structures and operations utilized within the Higher Education System must be reevaluated.

"It is not business as usual when you take taxpayer dollars." - Senator Elizabeth Warren regarding stewarding taxpayer resources responsibly

Like other Louisiana college and universities, Southern University's existing majors were developed in a previous era and merely relying upon a "School-based" (i.e. School of Engineering, etc.) organizational structure is a heritage construct that does not readily facilitate crossflow between departments. While well-suited for its intended purpose, the current context necessitates rethinking of academic structures to ensure:

- Employer-driven academic offerings
- Prioritization of academic resources to maximize economic impact
- Increased student recruitment, retention and placement
- Creation of synergy between faculty, staff and employers

In short, Southern University has need for a mechanism to focus University efforts, ensure alignment with the state's economic realities and requirements, and to support targeted investments in high priority areas. This context, bounded by Louisiana's economic realities and a mandate to steward resources effectively, is not static. Neighboring states aggressively compete for business investment and recruit the state's best and brightest students. Investors look for the best business climate, including a properly trained workforce, when evaluating where to place new firms. These realities provide a mandate for Southern University to critically examine its business practices and structures to lead Louisiana forward.

Faced with this reality, Southern University has stepped forward in leadership to identify specific approaches for generating additional state benefit via increasing student marketability and increased economic benefit. University leaders launched a 15-month process to identify a ready means of measuring,

evaluating and identifying possible improvements in University processes, structures and offerings to better align with the current context. The study looked both within academia and outside of it, and has culminated with a specific recommendation to both align University academic offerings, improve collaboration and unity of effort between departments and achieve measurable results for Louisiana's economy. The study's recommendation is a concept we will refer to as "Centers of Strength," an organizational construct drawn from industries best practices. "Centers," referring to nodes, events or other critical seat of emphasis, is well documented from concepts ranging from urban planning^{xiv} to military operations.^{xv} Applied to an academic context, the term "Center" has been utilized in a dizzying array of contexts – centers can be found associated with administrative, teaching, research, student success, even athletics on University campuses both in the US and internationally.

The concept of a "Center of Strength," however, is unique, not currently found on other college campuses, and promises to serve as a near-term step to help lead Louisiana forward. Drawing from best practices at other university Centers, *Southern University Centers of Strength concept seeks to unite multiple academic disciplines to achieve greater impact for student and state*. Stated otherwise, Centers of Strength will unite the strengths of multiple departments, focusing the University's academic efforts around producing equipped graduates for the highest priority needs of the state. In so doing, Southern will help lead Louisiana forward economically and culturally.

A Solution: Southern University's "Centers of Strength"

Any proposed change to an organization can expect resistance due to contrary preferences, workload associated with implementation, organizational inertia or other factors. While Southern University's mandate to lead during Louisiana's crucial season is unambiguous, clear definition of the proposed concept is required.

At Southern, five distinct Centers will be created which will bring together multiple majors from differing academic departments and generating specific outcomes that would not be achievable without bringing these disciplines together:

- Research Hubs: cross-disciplinary "pollination" of ideas, expertise, relationships, and research to achieve greater and more focused impact for Louisiana
- Innovation Generators: creation of new ideas impacting public policy, industry, and societal well being
- Inclusion Environments: by minimizing stove-piped disciplines, Centers will enhance collaboration, involvement, and diversity across students, staff, faculty, communities and other stakeholders

The result of this will be tangible benefits for Southern and the state of Louisiana:

- Focused academic offerings, aligned to Louisiana's highest priority needs
- Cutting edge research in disciplines designed to directly benefit Louisiana's economy
- Highly trained graduates with cross-disciplinary understanding, differentiating them to employers and resulting in workplace impact
- Cross-disciplinary/Multi-disciplinary research and innovation addressing society needs and real-world problems

Overviews of each of the five Centers are provided below:

Center for Social Entrepreneurship

Small businesses are the output of entrepreneurial energy and these firms represent 99.7% of all employers in the US.^{xvi} For job seekers, small businesses (defined as firms with fewer than 500 employees) employ 60.4% of the total US workforce.^{xvii} Therefore, equipping and incubating the next generation of entrepreneurs is crucial to the economic well-being of Louisiana. Further, according to the US Small Business Administration, minority-ownership of firms has increased 38% since 2007.^{xviii} Clearly, a crucial factor in the State's future success is entrepreneurship, and Southern University's Center for Social Entrepreneurship is stepping in to lead that effort.

This Center will serve as the flagship hub for Southern, playing an integrating function between the five centers and providing crucial business skills to each of the others. This will enable translation of discipline-specific research and expertise into jobs and businesses. The Center will engage the capacities of the College of Business' Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics and the Department of Management and Marketing as well as the Nelson Mandela College of Government and Social Science.

Center for Informed Learning

One key for Louisiana's ongoing economic success is building upon progress in public education and addressing critical shortages amongst educators. Employers routinely cite the quality of public schools as one of the factors when locating their businesses. Significant efforts have been made in recent years in Louisiana public education but more work remains. Recent evaluations, such as Education Week's rankings^{xix}, highlight the need for ongoing focus on education. Complicating matters, however, are demographic trends. While public school enrollment is projected to grow 8% in 2011-2023^{xx}, the acceleration of retiring baby boomers from education is forecasted to exacerbate the ongoing shortage of teachers in Louisiana.^{xxi} Southern's educational efforts within the Center will play a key part of addressing this need.

Southern's graduates who are presently leading Louisiana's push towards educational excellence know that when subjects connect with each other, greater learning occurs. To accomplish the same end within the University, the Center will be comprised of the College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies' School of Education.

Center for Integrative Sustainability

Leveraging the technical disciplines of engineering, agriculture and forestry to build Louisiana's future economy is an imperative for SU. Stewarding Louisiana's resources for future generations while providing sustainable economic growth requires training the next generation to participate in an economy based upon renewable energy and clean technology. As According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, employment in the renewable energy sector continues to serve as an economic engine worldwide, even when other energy sector jobs lag.^{xxii} Workforce forecasters predict that of the upcoming 50 best types of jobs in America, all of the engineering disciplines within this Center will be in high demand.^{xxiii} If we are to sustainably feed our world and engineer solutions to the challenges we face, the next generation must be properly trained.

Increasingly, opportunities within agriculture, forestry and engineering disciplines require cross-disciplinary exposure. To better enable this for faculty and students, the Center will engage the capacities

of the College of Sciences and Agriculture’s Department of Agricultural Sciences and Urban Forestry and Department of Biological Sciences, Chemistry and Environmental Toxicology, and the College of Engineering and Computer Sciences’ Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronic Engineering. Three tracks will be supported: 1) Sustainable Energy, Materials and Design Technology, 2) Economics of Sustainability, and 3) Sustainable Community. Initially, the Sustainable Energy, Materials and Design Technology (SMD) track will be emphasized. The SMD curriculum will support three concentration areas: 1) Materials Science and Energy Technology, 2) Biomass Conversion, Biofuels, and Bioenergy, and 3) Climate Change and Environmental Impact with computational applications infused throughout.

Center for Digital Innovation

Since the coining of the phrase “digital economy^{xxiv}” over 20 years ago, America has recognized the centrality of computers and information to our current economy. The decades since this realization have not been static, however. Change is continuous, and thus there is a need to focus educational efforts on innovation and improvement so as to produce graduates who are both prepared to enter the workforce, but also to lead innovation throughout their careers. Seven of the top 10 jobs in America fall within this category^{xxv}, reflecting the centrality of Computer Science-related skills to our information economy.

“My vision for the future state of the digital economy.....I see the freeing up, not just of productivity and money, but also positive energy which can bring a more equal world.” - Vittorio Colao, CEO Vodaphone Group

The speed of innovation in the digital economy requires uniting disciplines and facilitating rapid cross-flow of information between programs. Accordingly, the Center will engage the capacities of the College of Science and Engineering’s Department of Computer Science and College of Business’ Department of Management and Marketing.

Center for Sustainable Health and Wellness

The centrality of proper health care is an undisputed need for our society. With an aging population and need for further medical advances, Southern University plays a crucial role in developing the next generation of health care providers. Evidence of this centrality can be found in the fact that the health care sector comprises a large and growing percentage of the total US economy. In 2000, health care comprised 12.5% of GDP and had grown to 16.9% by 2015.^{xxvi} Against a backdrop of increasing needs and skyrocketing costs, Southern’s leadership in preparation of the next generation, research, innovation and creation of new solutions is crucial.

Just as modern medicine benefits from integration of medical disciplines, academic relevancy will be enhanced by the union of a range of health and wellness program within one Center. The Center will engage the capacities of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences’ Department of Behavioral Studies, Department of Social Sciences, Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy, the College of Education, Arts, and Humanities’ Department of Educational Theory, Policy and Practice, Department of Mass Communications, College of Sciences and Agriculture’s Department of Family and Consumer Sciences and the College of Nursing and Allied Health’s Department of Therapeutic Recreation and Leisure Studies.

Implementation Guidance

Principles of Implementation

In order to achieve success during implementation, guiding principles are required which serve as “rules of the road” for those who are participating in the project. When well understood by the entire team and utilized throughout execution, these principles will help to remove roadblocks and reduce the number of self-generated challenges.

Collaboration: The Centers of Strength, at their very core, are collaborative organizations. Accordingly, the preparation and implementation phases of their creation need to be characterized by involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders. The benefits of collaboration are well documented in business contexts^{xxvii} and these benefits translate to academic settings as well^{xxviii}. It should be noted that this can often appear to require additional time and money, but results are almost always more complete and lasting when achieved in partnership with those who are affected.

Problem Solving: A false hope in planning situations is the idea that all challenges can be anticipated and removed before execution. Further, it has been shown that identifying what the problems are, can often be more difficult than actually solving the problems, once defined^{xxix}. In any project, setbacks will occur, but by anticipating as many as possible, and proactively engaging to address them when they do occur, likelihood of success increases. For the Centers of Strength initiative, keeping a focus upon finding solutions for problems will enable progress when anticipated and unforeseen challenges appear.

Momentum: Building and achieving momentum is crucial to the success of any change endeavor^{xxx}. With this in mind, a focus must always be on managing the project forward. That means that a flexible approach and mentality must be central and that the initiative must avoid the common pitfall of attempting to find a perfect solution via over analysis. One of the greatest challenges facing projects is getting bogged down by organizational inertia, so securing momentum must be a priority.

Implementation Phases

Successful roll-out of a complex organizational change, even one with readily achievable benefits, necessitates careful planning. An effective technique is to utilize sequencing or phasing the key actions associated with the change in order to achieve the desired outcome. For Southern University’s implementation of Centers of Strength, a three phase approach is needed:

Phase 1 – The initial phase is focused on clearly articulating the basic concept and developing initial planning documents

Phase 2 – Next, efforts center on laying crucial groundwork in preparation for the actual roll-out/implementation of the plan

Phase 3 – This phase involves both the roll-out of the effort as well as building out supporting structures that will enable long-term success

Phase 4 – Finally, the effort involves following up on the initial effort to gauge specific need areas and to build connections with employers, students and donors

Key Tasks/Initiatives

Phase 1 – Advance Planning

Vision/Concept Document (already created) – The first step in implementation is capturing the original concept in written form so that others can understand and capture the vision. Typically generated by the originator

Strategic Roadmap (current document) – Building upon the initial step, a clear path forward must be devised which provides further detail to the vision, provides needed justification/rationale, and lays out a sequential series of actions to accomplish the objective.

Business Plans (pending) – Each specific Center possesses unique strengths, challenges and dynamics. Accordingly, a clear business plan capturing the competitive landscape, analysis of the organizational landscape, and financial impacts/ROI must be constructed.

Implementation Schedule (baseline included in current document) – Guiding the roll-out team is a living schedule document which defines specific tasks, task owners, sequencing, timing and manpower requirements. Baseline creation of this document is necessary in Phase 1 in order to enable rapid progress in subsequent phases.

Phase 2 – Laying Key Groundwork

Implementation Cabinet Formation – key team of stakeholders and action officers for executing roll-out of initiative. Should be formed based upon buy-in to concept, positioning to achieve change within the organization, key influencers who possess power to drive momentum, and others as appropriate. Selective involvement of those most impacted by the change may lead to greater participation/support.^{xxxi}

Communications Plan/Stakeholder Engagement Strategy – key messaging, identification of influencers, sequencing, methods of engagement, communications. A common mistake of implementation is to delay development and implementation of this step until too late. Must be clearly understood, internalized, shared with and articulated by stakeholders for unity of messaging and proactive engagement with key individuals/organizations.

“Boulder” Identification & Removal – any strategic initiative will face complex challenges that threaten to undermine success. Identification of these roadblocks and creation of solutions to remove or adjust course around them is crucial to success. Must be accomplished prior to public roll-out in order to avoid loss of momentum.

Phase 3 – Implementation & Build-out

Roll-out of Changes – internal (and as appropriate, external) communication of the change of structure to Centers concept. Draws from previous implementation scheduling, engagement, communications, and planning efforts.

Policy and Reinforcing Structure Development – build-out of the governing documentation and support materials to guide operations in the period following the change. In some situations, this must be brought forward into Phase 2, especially in contexts where internal resistance or inertia represents a barrier.

Implementation Audit/Evaluation – All plans requirement adjustment during execution and this is especially true when dealing with as many variables and stakeholders as Southern faces with the roll-out of its Centers of Strength concept. Throughout the roll-out Southern must evaluate the progress of the implementation and have insight into where course corrections are needed.

Phase 4 – Follow-up & Engagement

Region-specific Assessments – One of the challenges facing an organization tailoring its offerings to its constituents is that not everyone fits “neatly” into a general category, and needs differ from area to area. This is true regionally across Louisiana – some areas have strong economic activity while others face significant challenges. Taking the work of this study and going in depth for some/all regions would add another layer of understanding and guidance to the work that has been accomplished here.

Employer Outreach Initiative – Unified Centers have the ability to connect with certain employers around a suite of majors and students, providing a differentiating advantage over competing colleges. For employers, there is an efficiency associated with creating partnerships with entities that can deliver multiple type of candidates and if executed properly, may be willing to place priority on securing Southern’s students for internships and full-time employment.

Student Recruitment Strategy –In today’s highly competitive academic environment, Southern’s viability is linked to securing the best possible students. High caliber students will generate high caliber graduates, who will encourage future hiring of Southern grads, facilitate alumni giving, and open doors to future partnerships for Southern.

Development Strategy – Academia has a deep and fruitful relationship with development support as it comprises crucial funding outside of State and Federal coffers. For Southern’s Centers, generation of a development strategy will provided important revenue, but also will assist with generation of excitement and momentum in the employer and political stakeholder communities. Financial support serves as an evidence of legitimacy and can induce others to form partnerships via employment, political assistance, other means to benefit Southern.

Action Items & Owners

A key success factor for Southern is generating productive, near-term progress which provides insight and confidence to stakeholders that effective stewardship of resources is occurring and that momentum is being generated. According, the following action items table is provided as the basis for a living document, which will grow and adjust as the project unfolds:

Action Name	Action Owner	Phase	Due Date	Status
Prelim. Proposals	Staff	Pre	Oct 2016	Complete
Basic Concept Socialization	Stubblefield	Pre	Ongoing	Initial complete, ongoing require.
Strategic Roadmap	Staff	Phase 1	March 2017	In work
Legislative Engagement	Office of the President	Phase 1	Spring 2017	In work
Other Stakeholder Engagement	Academic and Research	Phase 1	Spring 2017	In work
Business Plans	Staff	Phase 1	June 2017	In work
Implementation Schedule	Staff	Phase 1	Ongoing	Baseline in Str. Roadmap

Implementation Cabinet Identification/mtgs	Belton, Brown, Stubblefield, Staff	Phase 2	Starting Spring 2017; facilitated meetings ongoing	
Communications Plan/Engagement Strategy	Staff	Phase 2	Sumer 2017	
“Boulder” ID and Removal	Stubblefield/Staff	Phase 2	Ongoing	
Official Roll Out	Stubblefield/Staff	Phase 3	Fall 2017	
Guiding Policies & Documentation Development	Stubblefield/Staff	Phase 3	Fall 2017 – Spring 2018	
Implementation Audit/Progress Evaluation	Staff	Phase 3	Periodic	
Donor Development Strategy	Staff	Phase 3	Winter 2017/18	
Employer Outreach Initiative	Staff	Phase 3	2017/2018 Academic year	
Student Recruitment Strategy	Staff	Phase 3	2017/2018 Academic year	
Region-specific Assessments	Staff	Phase 3	2017/2018 Academic year	

Implementation Schedule

Implementation Schedule

	Feb 17	Mar 17	Apr 17	May 17	Jun 17	Jul 17	Aug 17	Sep 17	Oct 17
Project/Initiative									
Strategic Roadmap development									
Stakeholder Engagement									
Business Plan development									
Implementation Cabinet Kick-off/Mtgs									
Communications Plan development									
"Boulder" ID & Removal									
Official Roll-Out									
Policy & Documentation development									
Implem. Audit & Progress evaluation									
Donor Development strategy									
Employer Outreach initiative									
Student Recruitment strategy									

Implementation Schedule



Project/Initiative	Nov 17	Dec 17	Jan 18	Feb 18	Mar 18	Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18
Strategic Roadmap development								
Stakeholder Engagement								
Business Plan development								
Implementation Cabinet Kick-off/Mtgs								
Communications Plan development								
"Boulder" ID & Removal								
Official Roll-Out								
Policy & Documentation development								
Implem. Audit & Progress evaluation								
Donor Development strategy								
Employer Outreach initiative								
Student Recruitment strategy								

Critical Success Factors & Next Steps

Several critical success factors, if leveraged, can aid Southern in achieving success during implementation. These include generating “quick wins,” focusing on crucial “engines” for momentum, and understanding the additional factors that will impact success.

Using “Quick Wins” To Create Momentum

While this plan lays out the recommended overall “Roadmap” for achieving successful implementation of the Centers of Strength Initiative, there may be need to secure a series of “quick wins” in order to help the initiative achieve early momentum. Accordingly, four key concepts are detailed to enable rapid progress and to build the efforts sense of progress early on.

- Completed Strategic Roadmap & Business Plans: Having a detailed plan can be used to show progress and help stakeholders understand the concept more fully than can generally be explained verbally
- Endorsements:
 - o Presidential Endorsement: For internal stakeholders, knowing that the President of the University strongly and thoroughly endorses the Centers concept will drive participation and support. If possible, secure written and verbal Presidential participation.
 - o Political Endorsement: Aside from funding support, key political figures can have outsized influence on stakeholders if they provide voice to the project. Securing figures such as the Governor, legislators, or others will aid in success.
 - o Alumni Endorsement: Luminaries or other public figures who are looked to by the alumni and broader communities may play a key part in achieving success if they lend their name recognition to the project’s success.

- Key Business Partner Endorsement: Leaders of major employers (CEOs, senior managers), if willing to endorse, can lend credibility to the linkage between Centers and economic development efforts.

“Engines” of Impact

While all of the elements identified in the Key Tasks/Initiatives section are necessary, two specific projects merit particular focus because they serve as engines for momentum and have cross-cutting impact:

- Communications Plan/Stakeholder Engagement Strategy: as soon as possible, Southern University leadership should clearly define exactly how communications will occur and sequence/specify specific stakeholders to pursue. Poorly executed communications not only creates confusion, it leads directly to resistance to change. Clear, unified messaging will create benefit in the other initiatives and accelerate momentum.
- Boulder Identification/Removal: organizational pockets of resistance and structural barriers represent examples of “boulders” that must be removed for success. Human nature and lack of clarity on how to address them often leads to avoidance of these sorts of challenges, but rapid attention will have significant impact on the initiative’s progress.

Additional Critical Success Factors

- Funding: an underlying requirement for achieving the changes needed is funding. Financial resources are required in the implementation phase, ongoing as the Centers perform their duties, and as special projects arise necessitating additional expenditures.
- Expertise: the tasks detailed in this plan do not necessarily align with the existing skillsets of the Southern University staff. Accordingly, temporarily securing appropriate expertise during the implementation phase is crucial.
- Leadership Attention/Priority: beyond mere endorsement, leaders in Southern University must make accomplishment of the Centers their priority. This can be accomplished by making measurable/achievable goals and linking them with personnel performance.

Conclusion

As with any journey into unfamiliar territory, having a clear map guiding the way ahead can prove crucial in reaching the desired destination. This Strategic Roadmap does not accomplish the journey itself for Southern University, but provides a clear path forward for implementation of the Centers for Strength concept. By following the guidance contained within, it provides a detailed approach on achieving the benefits of focusing University efforts, achieving the benefits of synergy between University academic offerings, and securing targeted investments that impact the University and the broader State of Louisiana.

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