

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025 BELIEVE, BELONG, BECOME.

YOUR **PURPOSE.** Our **Mission**.

A man's heart plans his way, but **the LORD** determines his steps. t has long been said that if you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time. While it is tempting to be satisfied with the mere act of doing something — firing — without regard to your aim, the stakes are too high in the task of Christian higher education to settle for anything short of the bullseye.

This strategic plan represents a deliberate effort to find the target, aim, and deploy the resources required to hit dead center. The plan is the work of more than 70 planners representing every pocket of the university. These planners analyzed data from nearly 1,200 surveys and numerous listening sessions to hear from every constituency with skin in the game: students, faculty, staff, parents, trustees, alumni, pastors, community and business leaders, and high school guidance counselors from across the state, just to name a few.

The strategic planning team asked the Lord to reveal His plans for what is next, building upon the work He has done in the life of Charleston Southern University since before its founding. We are blessed to enjoy those effects as our current **Point A** (where we are today). This plan identifies **Point B** (where we believe God wants us to go), charts a course to get there, and provides metrics to keep us on track and let us know when we arrive. While most metrics have not been included in this version of our plan, teams are armed with departmental plans to propel us toward our next destination.

Charleston Southern is well known for capitalizing on four distinctives in pursuit of our mission and vision. **Faith Integration** is our secret sauce, driven by faculty and staff universally committed to the principle that all truth is God's truth. **Academic Excellence** denotes our long-standing delivery of world-class education grounded in a biblical worldview and rooted in the liberal arts.

From undergraduate through doctoral programs, in majors ranging from business to Christian studies, humanities to nursing, and education to engineering, **Prepared Graduates** are our end game. We exist to unleash servant leaders equipped as critical thinkers, data-savvy problem solvers, skillful communicators, and effective collaborators ready to impact their communities for Christ. And we do all this in a Christian university on the national stage of **Division I Athletics**.

In the classroom and on the court, in the chapel and the coffee shop, Charleston Southern employs all means available to **integrate faith,** transforming every **learner** into a **leader** dedicated to **serving** God and others. These men and women may have come to CSU to earn a credential or start a career, but they discover so much more as they develop godly character, discover their calling, and commit themselves to what matters most.

Here is our bottom line: we **prepare servant leaders to pursue significant lives.** In so many ways, a Charleston Southern education is a **Passport to Purpose.** Helping students navigate their trek through life even better, and doing so for as many as possible, is the bullseye for this strategic plan.

For the glory of God, the good of His people, and the growth of His kingdom.

DONDI E. COSTIN, PhD President



GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

FOUNDING DIRECTIVE • MISSION • VISION • IMPACT • E.P.I.C. VALUES

FOUNDING DIRECTIVE

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you." *Matthew 28:19-20*

MISSION

Promoting academic excellence in a Christian environment

VISION

To be a Christian university nationally recognized for integrating faith in learning, leading, and serving

IMPACT

Preparing servant leaders to pursue significant lives

E.P.I.C. VALUES

The culture of any organization is "just the way things are done around here." As aspirational as our core values are in defining our ideal culture, these E.P.I.C. values are the standard to which we hold ourselves accountable as Christian colleagues. Adhering to this standard demands that every one of us live the words of Colossians 3:23-24:

"Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ." Driven by Jesus' command to go the extra mile as a joyful volunteer (Matt. 5:41), we serve others and glorify God by accomplishing our mission with excellence and without excuse. In mirroring the mind of Christ, our service is more opportunity than obligation. For us, producing results is an act of worship. Faculty members go the extra mile by transforming students into scholars. Staff members provide superior customer service because following Jesus demands it. Coaches instill a level of discipline that makes going the second mile seem second nature. Everyone understands that we develop servant leaders when we model servant leadership.

EXTRA-MILE SERVICE









PASSION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

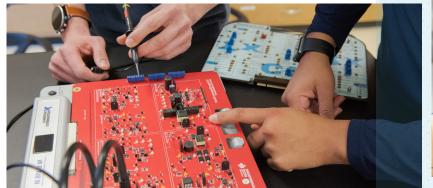


Inspired by the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), we serve our students by helping them embody the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-40). Our success is defined by student success, as they become everything God wants them to be — spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically. The framework for every decision in every department is simple: *How does this decision help our students succeed?*



INNOVATION ACROSS THE INSTITUTION

Created in the image of an innovative God, we answer His call to maximize our impact as good stewards (Gen. 1:27-28) by pushing the university to be increasingly effective and efficient. Responsible innovation surpasses average execution in every corner of our campus.







CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Reflecting the character of Jesus (Phil. 2:1-8) and the diversity of His Church (1 Cor. 12), we "urge [each other] to walk worthy of the calling [we] have received" (Eph. 4:1). Consistent with that calling, caring for our colleagues (relationships) and mastering our mission (results) are both of first importance. People *and* mission. People *on* mission.





GRAND PURPOSE

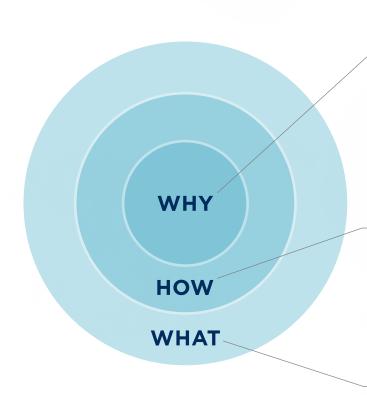
THE GREAT COMMISSION IS OUR WHY

imon Sinek has famously encouraged a generation of organizations to "start with why." Too many teams lose their way because they lose their why, a trap into which even Christian institutions sometimes fall. Mission drift is enemy number one for universities operating in an increasingly secular culture, where the temptation to compromise biblical convictions is ever present.

Not so for Charleston Southern, whose commitment to the Great Commission as its founding directive has never wavered. God willing, it never will.

CSU has consistently postured itself as a platform for the propagation of the gospel. God's difference-making power is on full display as we equip our students academically, professionally, and spiritually to make an impact in their respective spheres of influence before and after graduation. Because the stakes are so high in light of eternity, everything we do is an act of obedience to the Great Commission.

Sinek's Golden Circle illustrates the necessary connection between why, how, and what—in that order. Providentially, the Golden Circle demonstrates the Great Commission's central role in the life of CSU. Charleston Southern was founded in obedience to Christ's command to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to align with His design. It is why we exist today. At CSU, "teaching them to obey everything" Christ commanded is not just rhetoric, it is real.



Why: The Great Commission

How: Faith Integration in Christian Community

Academic Excellence in a Christian Environment (Mission) Integrating Faith in Learning, Leading, and Serving (Vision)

What: Servant Leaders Pursuing Significant Lives

GUIDING PROCESS

FAITH INTEGRATION IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IS OUR HOW

ur reliance on God's Word and our passion for student success make the Great Commission come to life. Our educational philosophy is driven by our mission statement's push for academic excellence in a Christian environment. In nurturing student growth, "academic excellence" is the seed, and "Christian environment" is the soil. It is both/and, not either/or.

At CSU, academic excellence is defined in many ways. Professors must be scholars whose knowledge informs their work in the classroom. Students are held to rigorous standards and demonstrate their capabilities in various ways, including writing, critical thinking, problem solving, and documented performance on national assessments and professional certification outcomes.

Meanwhile, our vision statement plants the process in fertile terrain as the community of faculty, staff, and peer mentors cultivate, students work the ground, and God provides the harvest. Saturating the entire campus community with this vision — *integrating faith in learning, leading, and serving* — ensures that faith integration is not an afterthought. Rather, it is the central thought in equipping students with a worldview in which faith forms character and character drives action.

At the founding of all but a tiny handful of the earliest universities in the Western world, integrating faith was key to academic excellence because God was seen as the source of all truth. They knew that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7) and educated students accordingly. Early universities acknowledged that purpose-filled living requires "the full riches of complete understanding" in "Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3 NIV). So do we.

Intentional faith integration is declining in much of higher education. But not here. Instead, co-laborers across our community—on and off campus—pour into students so they can experience everything God has for them in this life and the next. At CSU, opportunity is discovered in community. *Believing* and *belonging* set the stage for *becoming*.

GAME-CHANGING PRODUCT

SERVANT LEADERS PURSUING SIGNIFICANT LIVES IS OUR WHAT

his strategic plan is designed to guarantee that everything CSU does helps students *become* the servant leaders God wants them to be.

Servant leadership is evident in a colleague who demonstrates the value of going the extra mile and inspires coworkers to follow suit, a spouse who models the character of Christ at work and at home, a parent who puts family before themselves, a neighbor whose faith impacts every fiber of their being seven days a week, and an engaged citizen making a difference in the church and the world. At CSU, serious scholarship and real relationships lay a solid foundation for servant leadership.

Leadership is not limited to CEOs. In fact, everyone has the opportunity to lead by serving others within their particular sphere of influence. Regardless of job title or position on the organizational chart, servant leadership is influencing your team to accomplish its mission for the good of others and the glory of God. It is no more complicated than that, but it takes competence, character, and commitment to do that well.

Preparing graduates for what Jesus called "the abundant life" (John 10:10) makes a CSU education far more valuable than simply earning a credential and starting a career. Mounting evidence indicates that increasing numbers of students in this generation are experiencing a decreasing sense of meaning and purpose. But from matriculation through graduation at CSU, students learn that a life of significance — serving God, investing in others — is one's primary reason for being and ultimate measure of success. Helping students live that life to the fullest is why our faculty and staff have been called to serve.

At CSU, learning is for living. A thorough grounding in the liberal arts, including studies in critical reading and writing, literature, history, mathematics and science, as well as Christian studies, empowers students to succeed. Academic excellence in the context of doing "whatever you do ... for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31 NIV) propels our graduates toward professional competence and personal character. They understand that there is no room for mediocrity when honoring God is your main motivation. Maintaining high expectations in community life and rigorous standards in the classroom ensure that our graduates cross the commencement stage ready to change the world. With purpose. On purpose.

Preparing servant leaders to pursue significant lives is the definitive statement of our impact. Simply put, prepared people are our products. Helping our graduates pursue significance is why we are so passionate about student success. Just as the Great Commission (why) specifies well-equipped disciples as the product of its comprehensive teaching enterprise (how), we recognize fully prepared graduates (what) as the gamechanging product of a CSU education.

GETTING TO POINT B

THE EXTRA MILE

reparing graduates to pursue lives of significance is too important to leave to chance. So important, in fact, that our rally cry for engaging future students increasingly describes our approach to helping current students live God's dream: "Your purpose. Our mission."

In Great Commission terms, our role in "making disciples" is coordinating a comprehensive system to ensure every student has the opportunity to find and fulfill their life purpose. Simply, their purpose *is* our mission. Developing students who go **The Extra Mile** is our reason for being.

By equipping students with a biblical worldview, competencies to perform at the highest levels, godly character, and experiences to grow their grit, our mission includes guiding them to find their **sweet spot** in life. As an ideal, this sweet spot occurs at the intersection of (1) what you love, (2) what you're good at, (3) what the world needs, and (4) what you're paid for. We call it living a life of significance on purpose. Preparing students for that purpose is what we do.

There may be a gap between real and ideal for most people on the planet, especially those who confuse worldly success with eternal significance. But Christians develop a long-term view and learn to be content (Phil. 4:11-13), thankful (1 Thess. 5:18), joyful (Jas. 1:2-4), productive (Col. 3:17), and God-glorifying (Eph. 6:5-8) in every situation, regardless of their circumstances. Even so, the **sweet spot** framework can be filtered through a biblical lens to help students **discover their passion**, **design their pathway**, **develop their potential**, and **declare their purpose** during and after their university years. At CSU, students can tie their passion to their purpose as they move from success to significance even before their diplomas are in hand.

Designing and implementing a Christ-centered approach for **preparing servant leaders to pursue significant lives** is a major element of this strategic plan and is fundamental to solidifying our value proposition. Using a passport to depict a student's progression through the university years reflects our work as a system.





reshmen leave home and use their first year to discover more about God, themselves, their passions, and serving others as they explore career options and possible majors. If they haven't already, sophomores typically choose their academic majors and design their particular pathways to graduation. Juniors develop their potential to perform as members of their chosen profession as they transition from core courses to higher-level courses within their majors. And seniors complete their degree pathways and declare their purpose, deploying with purpose to pursue a life of significance. Graduate students, transfer students, and online students take this route as well, though often with a head start and at a much faster pace.

This system represents the tangible difference a CSU education makes in preparing students to go **The Extra Mile**. For the system to work optimally, it must be designed and implemented *as a system*. Which means our curricular and co-curricular enterprises must lock arms to propel students from passion to purpose. Faculty, students, advisors, mentors, coaches, curriculum coordinators, deans, the student success team, the spiritual life team, and the career center, among others, must all be engaged in its design and implementation. For a CSU education to produce maximum advantage, students must be exposed to a holistic development enterprise, not just a degree-granting exercise.

Designing and implementing this system to benefit every student represents this strategic plan's primary **Point B**. The desired end of our plan is issuing every student a **Passport to Purpose**, then sending them on their way to impact every corner of the globe for Christ. We are thus barreling toward a comprehensive approach to **preparing servant leaders to pursue significant lives.** Launching this strategic plan is the point of embarkation en route to God's preferred future for CSU.

WELCOME TO THE STARTING LINE

he ancient proverb is correct in reminding us that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. This Strategic Plan represents that crucial first step. More importantly, Proverbs 16:9 reminds us that "a man's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps." As a Christian university, that is exactly where we want to be. But we should remind ourselves just as often that publishing a plan is only one step of many. Unless that plan is implemented one gutsy move at a time, the race will never be run, much less won. Hope without action is never a winning strategy. Faith without works is dead.

Military planners often point out that no plan survives first contact with the enemy. Regardless, there is inordinate value in the planning process itself, even though alternate plans must be quickly enacted in the fog of war. The more important reminder in that well-documented military warning is the fact that an enemy is positioning himself to stand against us (1 Pet. 5:8). Still, no matter, because we have everything we need to triumph over the enemy's schemes (Eph. 6:11).

Now that our plans have been made, we trust the Lord to do what only He can do in bringing these plans to life. So, welcome to the starting line. Now, "let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2). With Him at the helm, the best is yet to come.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Despite the higher education headwinds of declining national enrollment trends, public questioning of the value of a college degree, and increasing societal secularization, Charleston Southern is radically blessed and well postured to strengthen our position in the most competitive collegiate landscape of our lifetime. If you were asked to pick any place to plant a university, the data would direct you to our street address. If you could start with the facilities we have, the community support we experience, the number-one tourist destination we enjoy, the population growth headed our way, our unrivaled church and denominational connections, and the mighty God we serve, you would fall to your knees to praise Him for this unbelievable opportunity. Then you would get up and get to work.

As confident believers in the God of all creation, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). In contrast to those who must see it to believe it, we believe it so we can see it.

In our dreams we see thousands of new students preparing for a life of significance, servant leaders following the example of Jesus in every sphere of influence.

We see revival on campus that spreads across the city as the CSU community seeks God's face and enjoys His favor.

We see students preparing by the thousands to be servant leaders pursuing significant lives.

We see increasing retention as a reflection of our commitment to providing students an educational experience that demonstrates the highest quality and utmost value.

We see faculty who join our ranks because they are attracted to our mission and flourish in our culture.

We see coaches who plant themselves here for the long haul, realizing the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to develop student-athletes into champions for Christ on and off the field.

We see staff members in every department who embrace student success as a calling, and who are compensated consistent with their impact on eternity.

We see diversity among our colleagues that reflects our student body and mirrors the biblical view, leveraging everyone's expertise and experiences for the good of our students and the glory of God.

We see a culture of innovation that transforms the latest technology and the best ideas across campus into mindblowing gains for student success and community impact.

We see increasing partnerships across the landscape of churches, businesses, nonprofit organizations, alumni, and donors that multiply as they increasingly see CSU as a partner of choice.

We see a flurry of campus construction as God blesses the university with increasing numbers of students, partners, and opportunities to make a difference for our community, our country, God's kingdom, and the world.

And this is just a smattering of what we can see as we get ready to run. Thankfully, the best is yet to come because God is on the move at CSU.

Most importantly, we see the words of Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV) as we lean into this lap: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen."

ACTION APPENDIX

mplementing The Extra Mile and leveraging this systematic approach to student success will open new windows of opportunity to strengthen ties across our campus that will enhance every aspect of our operation. Lord willing, locking arms in fast pursuit of the university's mission will result in measurable increases in enrollment, retention, and graduation, our three metrics-driven Wildly Important Goals. In other words, developing and implementing The Extra Mile is the primary Lead Measure that will drive material improvements in our fundamental Lag Measures (enrollment, retention, and graduation). And as has always been the case at Charleston Southern, sharing the gospel with every student, discipling them for a life of service, and equipping them with the biblical worldview is the foundation upon which this enterprise rests. We thus maximize our impact in preparing servant leaders to pursue significant lives.

WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS

ENROLLMENT. RETENTION. GRADUATION.

Our plan to prepare students for significant lives will benefit enrollment, retention, and graduation, our three metrics-driven Wildly Important Goals.

ENROLLMENT. Enlarging enrollment intentionally across all channels (undergraduate and graduate, on campus and online) will maximize the number of students who benefit from a Charleston Southern education.

RETENTION. Increasing retention rates in every category will push us to improve the student experience across the board. It will also afford more students the chance to take full advantage of this golden opportunity to discover their passion, design their pathway, develop their potential, and declare their purpose.

GRADUATION. Improving 4-year and 6-year graduation rates will allow students to leverage their educational investments and move *from* student status *through* success *to* significance much sooner. Deploying them with purpose as soon as possible is our moral obligation and is the most obvious indicator of student success. The quicker we launch students into the workforce, the more quickly they can impact their spheres of influence and their personal bottom line.

succeed are all part of our playbook. But everything rises and falls on our success in implementing The Extra Mile as the primary means of winning students to Christ, equipping them with the biblical worldview, increasing enrollment, raising retention, and boosting graduation rates in every category. Here is the simple truth: If we strengthen the university in every meaningful way, increasing numbers of students will come, stay, and graduate on time. We will then unleash graduates to change the world for the good of others and the glory of God as they see their diplomas as their Passports to Purpose.

Notes:

Page 1. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

Pages 11-12. "Start with why" and The Golden Circle graphic. See Simon Sinek, Start with why: how great leaders inspire everyone to take action, New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2011.

Page 20. Modified Purpose graphic. See "Simon Sinek and The Golden Circle" (https://thebeautifultruth.org.uk/human-insight/sinek-golden-circle/).

Page 29. Wildly Important Goals. See Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving your wildly important goals.* New York: Free Press, 2012.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

EXEMPLIFY A DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

- 1.1 Obey the Great Commandments (Matt. 22:37-40) and Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)
- 1.2 Hire for Christian identity in accordance with the university's founding directive, mission, vision, and biblical core values
- **1.3** Educate the campus community about the university's Christian identity as expressed in its core documents
- 1.4 Promote the biblical worldview to encourage spiritual and intellectual formation
- 1.5 Provide Christian higher education resources to equip faculty and staff to fulfill their calling
- **1.6** Employ the Whitfield Center for Christian Leadership to equip individuals for leadership and service through the development of the biblical worldview

PURSUE A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

- **2.1** Foster an E.P.I.C. culture marked by Extra-Mile service, a passion for student success, innovation across the institution, and Christian community
- **2.2** Exemplify Christ-centeredness, integrity, transparency, grace, inclusion, and the truth that all people are made in God's divine image
- 2.3 Promote and increase biblical diversity, establishing it as a primary driver of cultural excellence
- **2.4** Recruit and support Christian scholars who model academic excellence, Christ-centered staff dedicated to improving university services, and winning Christian coaches who embrace the institution's mission
- 2.5 Refine and improve student services across campus to ensure excellence in customer service
- **2.6** Implement appropriate best practices found in higher education institutions committed to excellence and innovation
- **2.7** Continue to advance a Christ-centered, NCAA Division 1 athletics program marked by excellence and success in academics, compliance, competition, and facilities

ATTRACT AND ENGAGE A VIBRANT STUDENT BODY

- 3.1 Increase enrollment across all channels (on campus and online)
- **3.2** Improve retention rates in every category
- 3.3 Leverage the institution's value proposition to enhance its brand and reach
- 3.4 Improve academic advising to facilitate student success
- 3.5 Develop undergraduate and graduate programs to meet marketplace needs
- **3.6** Expand innovative use of technology throughout the curriculum
- 3.7 Increase international student enrollment
- **3.8** Develop a financial aid assistance program for returning students experiencing hardships
- **3.9** Increase student satisfaction scores for support services and student life activities

PREPARE GRADUATES TO FLOURISH SPIRITUALLY,

- **4.1** Design and implement a comprehensive student success model that develops servant leaders to pursue significant lives
- **4.2** Provide a holistic campus discipleship program aligned with the institution's comprehensive student success model and in partnership with gospel-centered churches
- 4.3 Raise 4-year and 6-year graduation rates
- **4.4** Expand career development and experiential learning opportunities to align with the comprehensive student success model
- 4.5 Increase global education initiatives to broaden graduates' understanding of the world
- 4.6 Encourage collaborative research and scholarship between faculty and students

INTELLECTUALLY, PHYSICALLY, AND PROFESSIONALLY

- **4.7** Provide a consistently safe campus
- 4.8 Increase participation in intramurals, club sports, and fitness center organizations

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, AND EQUIP CSU FACULTY AND STAFF

- **5.1** Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to fulfill their calling by encouraging and funding faculty research, conference attendance, and cross training
- **5.2** Improve the student, faculty, and staff experience by enabling team members to employ information technology best practices
- 5.3 Strengthen current policies and procedures related to recruiting and onboarding
- **5.4** Develop a plan that allows for increased use of flexible staffing options and improved alignment of human resources with growth of related functions
- 5.5 Devise and monitor a university compensation plan that is consistent with peer institutions
- 5.6 Minimize turnover of faculty and staff

RÉNEW, DEVELOP, AND STRENGTHÉN RELATIONSHIPS TO FULFILL THE INSTITUTION'S MISSION AND VISION

- 6.1 Engage a robust community of alumni who are passionate about advancing the university
- **6.2** Create an atmosphere that enables parents to be informed and engaged in campus life and their child's success
- **6.3** Provide opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to develop meaningful relationships with one another and individuals outside the university through service projects and teambuilding events
- **6.4** Employ the Whitfield Center for Christian Leadership to develop relationships for strategic purposes
- **6.5** Build mutually beneficial partnerships with institutions, companies, and churches that will host interns, hire graduates, serve on advisory boards, and support students
- **6.6** Develop and strengthen relations between the university and churches so the latter will recommend their students to Charleston Southern with confidence

FAITHFULLY STEWARD RESOURCES

- 7.1 Maintain a sound financial base to support and advance the university's programs and services
- 7.2 Create a transformational gift culture that inspires others to invest in student success
- **7.3** Launch a comprehensive fundraising campaign to support the university's strategic vision regarding scholarships, facilities, and programs required to accomplish the institution's mission
- 7.4 Increase alumni giving percentage
- 7.5 Grow Legacy Society membership
- **7.6** Meet required standards for academic accreditations, NCAA, Big South, and Title IX Gender Equity compliance
- **7.7** Improve student satisfaction through enhanced maintenance, repair, and upgrades to campus facilities



