



Vision for the Future

The future vision of Carl Sandburg College is a bright one. The College has been left in good stead by the previous president, Thomas A. Schmidt. Challenges emerged from the Self-Study which we anticipated and welcomed and which provide the College with good direction going forward. Some of the challenges identified were relatively easy to remedy, and in fact, have already been addressed. However, other challenges were more difficult. As the co-chair of the Self-Study process, I considered this process enormously helpful in charting out a course for the presidency. In addressing the vision ahead, I will focus on those challenges, which require more thought and resources from the institution.

I anticipate one of the first items on the agenda is to begin with a Strategic Planning process to develop a plan to give the College guidance regarding priorities for the future. While the previous strategic planning process was good in that it left the administration with a clear mission statement, focal points and goals, overarching beliefs and strategies, it did not leave the institution with a clear day-to-day, month-to-month, or year-to-year sense of prioritization. In addition, the process and plan that we develop will need to be dynamic as issues such as the economic recession and the state of Illinois' near financial collapse were not foreseen or anticipated. In addition, I anticipate [sustainability issues](#) in regard to our facilities, the way we view and use our resources, and even our budget will emerge from this planning process.

The next challenge is how the lack of funding from the state and the financial crisis that Illinois is experiencing has impacted the College and will continue to impact the College. The administration with the help of the Board of Trustees has consistently and slowly over the last 10 years moved the College into a financially sound position. However, the delay and/or nonpayment of two of four of the state payments can still cause financial distress for the college. Unfortunately, this is not something the College can remedy quickly, rather it is something that we will have to address over the next few years, but will involve creating more reserves for the College to use

during times such as this and a more focused development of our Foundation. Fundraising will become more important for the College than it ever has before. The role of the Foundation has expanded over the last 10 years, but I see pressure to continue that expansion again in the next 10 years.

Another area that will be a challenge in the future is determining the Career and Technical programs the College will offer. In the past, the College has tried to provide a wide variety of Career and Technical programs; however, the future will likely include a more focused approach on providing fewer programs but doing those programs well. Partnering with neighboring community colleges will become increasingly important so that we do not compete directly with our neighboring community college, rather we work together to complement the offerings of each college is expected. This approach has already been started with several meetings between Carl Sandburg College and Spoon River College. The days of both colleges offering exactly the same programs are soon to be gone except in those fields of high demand such as nursing. The new approach involves providing seats to Spoon River in all of our programs that they do not offer and the same in reverse for Carl Sandburg College. Initial discussions have also considered the concept of sharing of faculty in some programs. This is an area that will be ripe for future discussions and innovative ways to meet the educational needs of our districts.

The use of technology will continue to be in the forefront of the institution. How we manage and maintain technology to our students in a cost effective manner will continue to be a challenge. Currently, we are experimenting with a new technology in our computer labs, thin computing, that allows us to upgrade the computer labs with a main host server with small computers that can surf the net and run needed applications. Thin computing will be used instead of replacing all computers every three years. We would like to experiment with more ideas such as these to allow the College to manage its resources in the most effective way possible. Along those lines, encouraging the campus to consider innovative and creative ideas for all departments is planned.

During the financial crisis of the past year, several positions within the College were not replaced for 2011. Slowly, over the last 10 years, the College has collapsed several positions as they have been vacated, but this is not something that can continue indefinitely if we want to be able to deliver a quality education to our students. We are approaching a point where we cannot reasonably collapse any further without suffering a loss in service. What we

need to focus on going forward is how best to staff our current positions. As the organization changes, the content of positions may change as will the type of faculty we have based upon the programs we're offering. Above all, Carl Sandburg College is determined to provide a quality education in the best facilities possible.

Effective communication continues to be an issue at the institution even in this age of emailing and texting. While this always seems to be a problem in large organizations, there is certainly more work to be done in this area. There continues to be a sense that some in the organization do not know or have a good idea of what is going on in the institution. Through the Self-Study process we have spent a good deal of time looking at our structures, committees, processes, and reporting relationships to understand that the means for effective communication are in place. What is not working well are some of the processes. We have already begun to change some of those processes and to focus on better using the structures we have.

An enhanced focus on enrollment management and student success will continue to be at the forefront of our thinking. This focus includes a more dedicated approach to student orientation, managing student expectations, retention, and completion. The way in which we approach career and technical education students will continue to be refined with a greater focus on retention and completion. We are already seeing transfer/university studies students are a greater proportion of our student body and that trend will likely continue. Creating an environment that gives those students a real sense of the university experience will be of paramount importance. Additionally, excellent advising will be increasingly important to ensure transfers to other colleges and universities occur as smoothly as possible. Also a more focused approach to our marketing and recruitment efforts will continue to be needed going forward as the institution learns to navigate in the increasingly competitive higher education market.

Last, and probably the most important, is the need for a complete paradigm shift among our faculty and staff in regard to assessment. While the College has engaged in assessment processes for many years, it has been viewed more as something that needs to be done for outside evaluators rather than a mindset whereby we want and desire to continually improve ourselves, our departments, and our services for students. Along with the strategic planning process and plan, the only other item of similar importance will be assessment. Carl Sandburg College has a history of taking great pride in its programs and

services and providing a quality education. However, the time to move to a more continuous quality approach in all that we do has come. The institution is ready and primed to begin that paradigm shift.

As the Self-Study process has moved into this final phase, I find myself excited and enthused for what lies ahead. We have learned a great deal during the self-study process and the entire campus is ready not only for our visit in November, but more importantly, ready to meet the challenges ahead.

