

# The SPC 7/24 Initiative:

## Seven major Focuses, 24 observable projects



### 1. FOCUS ON STUDENT SUCCESS

- Student Support Systems
- Student Life
- Individualized Learning Plans

### 2. INCREASED PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

- Accreditation
- Retention
- Community Partnerships
- Revitalized/ revised Strategic Planning

### 3. MANAGING GROWTH

- Annual Schedule Planning
- Faculty Hiring/ Replacement Plan
- Review Online Education Capacity
- Facilities Master Plan

### 4. MANAGING WITH SCARCE RESOURCES

- Document current Revenues/ Expenses
- Three-year Financial Plan
- Increase Non-state Revenues
- Compensation Review

### 5. ONE COLLEGE

- One Budget: AA/AS - BS - Workforce  
- E Campus - Community Mission

### 6. CORE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Critical Thinking
- Global Awareness
- Art and Aesthetic Commitments

### 7. TRANSPARENCY/ COMMUNICATION

- Stronger Committee Roles - Participation
- New Communications technologies
- Budget Development Process
- Empowerment Agenda
- Board Leadership

## The 90-Day Report of President Bill Law to the Board of Trustees and the St. Petersburg College Community

I begin with a word of thanks to every member of the St. Petersburg College community. Following my appointment last Spring and since my first day on the job in early June, I have been afforded every kindness and courtesy from the Board, the faculty, staff, students, and community leaders. All involved have been constructive in their suggestions, engaging in their efforts to inform me, patient on how 'new eyes' might help devise new responses, and dutiful in responding to changes in leadership style. I believe that the college has come through a year of significant transformation in fine form and is well-prepared to build on its well-earned past success.

This action plan is intended to reflect my assessment of how we might best capture the energy and enthusiasm that has surfaced at the front end of the new era at St.

Petersburg College. It works to strike a balance among imperatives, opportunities, and enduring issues that can be addressed and resolved. It will entail a great deal of commitment

from all of us. It will however, allow us to move - or prepare to move - to the next level of success at the college. SPC 7/24 activities can be covered within existing budget commitments. Some results of the SPC 7/24 plan will require priority in future budgets.

Certainly, I wish to have questions, comments, and feedback in response to this document.

Respectfully submitted,

William D. Law, Jr.  
President



## Focus 1: Student Success

My observations of the systems we have in place to support student success evidenced the need for a comprehensive review of their effectiveness and their usefulness. The significant growth of the college over the past few years appears to have overburdened the admission, registration, advisement and payment practices of the college:

- Students commonly experience waiting times of several hours in order to register;
- Students make multiple visits to campus to complete their registration;
- the online opportunities for students to handle matters on their own are greatly underutilized;
- In most of our locations, the facilities are inadequate and poorly designed for a smooth, logical intake and registration process.

Students and staff uniformly compliment the significant improvements that have been made to the student financial aid process over the past year. The observable, measurable, positive changes now provide a suitable base for even greater service to our students, for whom financial aid is an ever-more critical component of their enrollment at St. Petersburg College. Greater integration of the financial aid process with the other admission and registration processes is needed.

### Moving forward:

- We will undertake a detailed, systematic review of the components of the MAP registration and

support processes; this review will determine the extent to which the training and support activities outlined in the original plan have been put in place as anticipated;

- We will assess the online support available to students as part of the MAP plan; this assessment will identify barriers and opportunities to determine how more students can be encouraged to handle those parts of the process that do not require staff interactions;
- We will move district-wide services presently housed at St. Petersburg/Gibbs and Clearwater Campuses to the district services, freeing up additional space for registration support activities;

In my Listening Post visits, students asked that additional clubs and activities be considered. I will honor their respectful request.

### The long-term view:

***Every student will have an individualized online learning plan that allow them to make optimum use of online support; students will interact with our staff throughout the year, not just at key registration times. The college will be able to greatly expand the communication and support it provides to students on a proactive, individualized basis.***



## Focus 2: Increased Public Accountability

### Accreditation

The backbone of the public support for colleges has long been the system of regional accreditation – The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), in the case of St. Petersburg College. This system is undergoing intense scrutiny and modification at the national level as a means for establishing greater accountability and as a means for documenting the impact of the collegiate experience.

Simply put, every college will now be required to demonstrate the learning achieved by its graduates as the basis for its continued accreditation. Prior standards focused mostly on resources, credentials, and the soundness of internal policies and practices. The shift to demonstrating learning outcomes is monumental.

### Retention

Related to the accreditation changes is a similar public policy emphasis on improving the graduation rates of students at the college. Specific attention is being given to the graduation success rates of students of color. St. Petersburg College's existing commitment to this area will need to be expanded and invigorated to meet increased public expectation.

### Community Partnerships

Among the many discussions I have held in these first months, a common theme has emerged on the desire for St. Petersburg College to revisit and renew its partnership commitments with the Pinellas County School District. Beyond a number of highly meritorious joint programs, I sense a desire to greatly expand access to dual enrollment courses, to find ways to support students who may not see postsecondary education in their future.

## Focus 2: Increased Public Accountability (Continued)

### Strategic Plan

Critical to the success of every component of the college operations is the development of a viable, supportive, and directive Strategic Plan. Among college stakeholders there is some voiced concern that the activities of the college are, at times, difficult to relate to the college's mission and certainly to existing Strategic Plans.

It is my belief that the key responsibilities of the College's Board of Trustees include three key elements:

- Hiring and evaluation of the president;
- Adoption of the College's Strategic Plan with annual review of the plan;
- Adoption of the college's operating budget in accordance with the Strategic Plan and other exigent conditions.

### Moving forward

Over the coming months we will outline the timeline and related procedures to assure the Board can fulfill these responsibilities at the very highest level of public expectation and accountability.

The first order of business will be to review the existing Strategic Plan and to make certain that it outlines the appropriate and desired direction for the college in fulfillment of its mission.

The Board will also need to review (and revise as appropriate) its process for the annual evaluation of the President.

## Focus 3: Managing Growth

The extraordinary growth in student enrollment over the past several years is a testimony to the critical role St. Petersburg College plays in the lives of the citizens it serves. There can only be praise for the faculty and staff who have managed this challenge on a daily basis.

### Schedule Planning

My early discussions and observations lead me to believe that the balance has tilted away from meeting student needs and towards "greater productivity." This imbalance has created:

- uncertainty over the courses and schedule to be offered each semester, particularly on the smaller sites;
- uncertainty over the appropriate, educationally-defensible class sizes for our courses;
- uncertainty over the appropriate teaching load for faculty; (it is not uncommon to find faculty teaching seven or eight courses in a semester)

### Faculty Hiring

The delayed process for hiring faculty is on my list of top concerns. Arriving in June, I was surprised at the number of fulltime, budgeted faculty positions that remained unfilled. Indeed, hiring to fill these positions was most active in late July and even into early August.

St. Petersburg College is too good of an institution to have a hiring process that causes us to choose last in the efforts to recruit a nationally-recognized faculty.

### Online growth and support

In my conversations with academic and instructional leaders, the topic of student success in online courses has been a major focus. In a number of areas the course success rate is substantially below 50%, indeed at

times below 40%. I have been surprised to learn that the expectation for student success in these courses is lower than our expectation for 'face-to-face' courses. As discussed in Focus 2, above, we need to be about the business of increasing ALL the success rates for our students.

### Facilities

Board action at the June meeting has put in motion campus-based reviews of facilities needs for the immediate future. We have retained a consultant to undertake a sophisticated review of future enrollment demand in light of the changed student demographics and the growth of online courses. Within the next few months, I anticipate that we will be bringing to the Board a series of short-term projects for all instructional sites that will expand the opportunity for meeting existing and future enrollment demand.

### Moving Forward

- For the 2011-12 academic year we will develop a guaranteed annual schedule; students will be able to plan their semester and year without concern that we will cancel courses that disrupt these plans;
- We will revise the timeline for faculty hiring to allow for the process to be completed before the end of the Spring semester
- We will undertake a comprehensive review of class size and faculty loads prior to the presentation of the 2011-12 operating budget;
- We have initiated a review of the student success rates in online courses toward the end of identifying improved support strategies;

## Focus 4: Managing with scarce resources

### Documenting the Budget

Clearly, a level of expertise is needed for the technical development and construction of an effective operating budget. At the same time, it is incumbent on those of us in leadership to develop the tools and means necessary to provide all interested parties with information and insight that can be used to participate in meaningful discussions over college priorities and expenditures. Those tools and those discussions need attention over the coming months. Paramount in these analyses are the facts surrounding program costs and the extent of costs in non-instructional areas.

### Multi-year Financial Plan

It is very difficult to predict college revenues. It is, however, not impossible to construct future funding scenarios using our experience and expertise to guide our vision. Our efforts to meet the many demands of our mission would be well served by the creation of a three-year budget plan to assist our planning efforts.

The multi-year finance plan's highest priority should be on providing our very best guidance to students in the area of tuition and fees. With some work on our part, we can create enough flexibility within state guidelines and our local jurisdiction to set tuition without waiting for the last-minute decisions of the Florida legislature.

### Non-state resources

With state funding falling below 50% of college resources, it is imperative that we expand and strengthen our activities in both Foundation fund raising and in a greatly expanded Contracts and Grants operation. I am of the opinion that a college of our level of excellence will be highly competitive for a much wider range of grants than we presently have.

### Compensation and Pay

The work of Interim President Furlong and the Board of Trustees to provide a much-needed pay increase for the current year permeated much of the discussion I have had on campus as over the past few months. Any number of people have asked me to express their deep appreciation to the Board.

For faculty, I feel a need to respond to legitimate concerns that have been expressed over both the structure of the faculty salary schedule and also the reasonable expectations for movement within



this or any new schedule.

For other staff, I wish to undertake a review of our competitiveness within the Pinellas/ Tampa Bay region. St. Petersburg College needs to be able to attract the very best pool of candidates when openings occur. At the same time, I do not want to see staff leave us in order to earn a relatively few dollars more at some other employer.

## Focus 5: One College

***This focus will be the most difficult to accomplish.***

All of the many areas of the college have a well-earned sense of pride in the delivery of their programs and services to the students and the community. Reflecting the scope and growth of those services, it is not surprising that faculty and staff

have developed a sense of self-direction in day-to-day operations. And while there exists uniform vocal support of the concept of "One College" many of the systems and practices do not support a more unified St. Petersburg College.

- The college budget is not unified, particularly in the integration of baccalaureate programs with the more traditional associate programs; changes in legislation now foster full integration of the baccalaureate programs within the college operating budget;
- E-campus has been developed with a similar separation from the college's operating budget; progress has been made in integrating these activities, but additional work is necessary;
- The increasingly important Workforce mission of the college is marginally understood and woefully underdeveloped; this area needs immediate attention;
- The college's community mission has been a source of pride, but is not generally integrated within the operating budget or strategic plan; Board efforts to impel greater structure for the Arts within the curriculum are on point in this area. The recent engagement with Gibbs High School provides another point of development in the community commitments of the college.

***The stresses of the One College initiative will be most keenly felt in the area of faculty and staff position descriptions and compensation.***

***In the end, One College requires one cohesive operating budget, one cohesive personnel plan, one cohesive marketing/ advertising focus and one support system to benefit students.***

## Focus 6: Core Learning

### Outcomes

This is the area of focus about which I am least concerned.

In my first 90 days I have been greatly impressed with the focus and introspection of the college on key matters that relate to student learning. My in-depth one-on-one meetings with the college's deans have been inspiring and reassuring. Let me be clear: whatever challenges the college faces, the focus on providing the highest quality learning experience remains at the core of our values.

I have listed this as a focus, because much work is taking place and much remains to be done.

- The college's **critical thinking initiative** is in place and gaining traction; students are being challenged – and supported – to expand their level of learning;
- We have developed a refined vision for our **global education efforts**; in sum, we will give the very highest priority to providing classroom learning experiences, travel experiences, and out-of-

class opportunities for our students.

- Expanding our efforts to attract foreign students is of great institutional value; it is, however, secondary to **expanding opportunities and learning for existing students**;
- We will seek additional opportunities for faculty to participate in international initiatives as a means for developing the priority experiences for our students;
- Efforts that do not relate to the core instructional and faculty development initiatives will be a much lower priority for the college.
- As mentioned elsewhere, we have taken to heart the Board's guidance on **integrating our outstanding Arts opportunities into the curriculum**; a follow up report on this work will be made in the Spring
- Work continues to be certain that our students are at the **highest levels of**

**technologically-adept learners**; with half of our students participating in online learning in some form, we have a strong base from which to achieve new levels of student achievement.

The development of the aforementioned Individual Learning Plans is a critical component in supporting our students in the artful uses of technology.

## Focus 7: Transparency and Communication

With more than 32,000 students, seven learning sites, more than a thousand employees and a mission as sophisticated of any college in Florida, it is no surprise that communication and information sharing is a challenge. Additionally, the times in which we live are increasingly characterized by the expectation that the public and the stakeholders will have timely and convenient access to key information regarding college operations.

### Improved participation

The short-term plan we are laying out here will require us to immediately adopt a commitment to:

- Expand participation of faculty and staff in college communications through expanded, enhanced committee memberships and access to day-to-day decisionmaking;
- We will need to give a priority to how we can improve the participation and contribution of our career staff in these activities;

### Improved communications tools

The College will need to implement new practices and to utilize up-to-date technology in keeping all interested parties engaged in our activities;



- The Board of Trustees has led the way in this commitment with the creation of a website for Board information and a repository for past Board activities;
- Electronic development of the monthly Board agenda and related materials has been implemented;
- The Faculty Governance Organization has initiated its efforts with the creation of a website, linked directly to the college’s homepage; support for this effort is in the very best interest of all of us;
- We have taken the necessary steps to implement new online communications technology that allow for universal sharing of information and activities; this technology – Sharepoint – is extremely low-cost, high impact, off the shelf software in use at thousands of organizations throughout the world. We have already begun the pilot rollout of the technology at Allstate and at the District office.

**Improved Budgeting**

No issue is as important to the commitment to transparency as is the college budget development process. With the Board’s encouragement, we have already begun the development of improved monthly financial reporting on the status of the college budget; in the development of the 2011-12 college operating budget we will provide real-time, comprehensive information on revenue, expenses, priorities, reserves, and funding commitments.

**The Empowerment Agenda**

In the past week, I have begun the early discussion with the president’s staff and the FGO on an initiative that is described as the “Empowerment Agenda.”

- This effort is intended to devolve authority away from the central office to the appropriate and authorized budget managers.
- Site leaders need to have sufficient responsibility and authority to manage daily activities within approved budgets;
- Deans need to be able to make and implement decisions on the delivery of instruction without the need for multiple approvals at other levels on the organization chart;
- Expenditure procedures will be revised to reflect the need for sound business practice while displaying a much higher level of trust in budget managers in the expenditure of funds;

**Board of Trustees Leadership**

Finally, I stand ready to respond with my very best energies to assist the Board of Trustees in developing a more strategic focus in the use of its time and talent. Working together, we will provide a clear leadership focus that guides the decisions and activities of all faculty and staff. We will work together to develop the most useful tools for demonstrating the fiduciary responsibility we share in response to our citizens.

**Timeframes Overview**

**90-day window**

- Empowerment agenda
- Faculty hiring/ replacement plan
- Evaluate and modify MAP/ Student support system
- Adoption of new technologies for staff communication and info sharing (Sharepoint)
- New Foundation Leadership
- Improved committee structures and memberships

**180-day window**

- Strategic Plan review
- Document current revenues and expenses in a form that can be communicated to all members of the college
- New Budget process
- Review online capacity
- Guaranteed Annual Schedule process
- Faculty Salary structure review
- Refocus and Expand Workforce commitment
- Marketing/ advertising review and revision



**By July 1**

- One College Budget
- Contract and Grants enhancement
- Personnel compensation review
- Facilities Master Plan
- Placement and Enhanced Career support
- Multi-year financial plan

**Ongoing with Budget priority focus**

- Individual Learning Plans
- Core Learning Outcomes
- Board Leadership