

Southeast Tech
Strategic Planning Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose:

To present the draft of strategic planning vision plan.

Attached to this summary is a draft Strategic Vision Plan from Market Street Services. The draft explains the process as well as a draft plan. The process included Strategic Assessment with two principal sections – Strategic Activity and Qualitative Themes and Analysis – leading to a Strategic Structure with an integrated program of work. The general themes are: Institutional Management, Marketing and Promotion, Programs and Partnerships and Resource Sustainability. A clarified Mission and Vision are being finalized over the next 30 days.

Administrative Recommendation to School Board:

Acknowledge the Strategic Planning report.



SOUTHEAST TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
DRAFT STRATEGIC VISION PLAN

Submitted by *Market Street Services, Inc.*
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INTRODUCTION

Since opening its doors in 1968, Southeast Technical Institute (Southeast Tech) has grown and adapted to the Sioux Falls region's changing economic landscape and labor market demands. Over the decades, it has continued to strive to create workforce excellence, meet the needs of the business community, and train and educate individuals for employment opportunities, professional growth, and life-long learning. However, there remain issues and obstacles that have challenged Southeast Tech's growth, including biases against trade employment sectors, low unemployment rates, structural and governance issues, and others. Despite these constraints, Southeast Tech has continued to be productive and garner positive feedback from employers on the quality and employability of Institute graduates. A foundational question for Southeast Tech's new vision plan is how much **more** effective could the Institute be if its structural and operational challenges were effectively addressed.

The Institute's last official strategic planning process was conducted in 2005 and incorporated actions focused on a five-year strategic implementation window. By 2008, Southeast Tech had largely accomplished the tasks from the 2005 plan or determined them to not be viable for further pursuit. At that point, subsequent years have seen Southeast Tech conduct annual strategic assessment and prioritization. With the regional and national economies recalibrating after the end of the Great Recession and workforce capacity and availability emerging as the Sioux Falls area's principal competitive concern, it is a valuable time to revisit long-term strategic planning at Southeast Tech.

The full complement of research into Southeast Tech's past strategic planning and feedback from public, private, and institutional stakeholders from across the Sioux Falls region and the Southeast Tech community led to key findings and conclusions that informed the structure and content of this draft Strategic Vision Plan. Through effective implementation of its strategy, Southeast Tech will help to ensure a more sustainable talent pipeline for local businesses and continue to provide quality education and training opportunities for Southeast Tech's students.

Assessment and confirmation of the Institute's vision and mission will provide guideposts to inform the school's future operations, programs, and partnerships. With workforce availability representing the Sioux Falls region's principal competitive concern, Southeast Tech's Strategic Vision Plan is both timely and necessary as the community seeks to sustain its growth and provide employers with the talent they need to be successful.

While the larger question of greater in-migration and talent recruitment is vital to Sioux Falls' economic future, this strategy specifically addresses the enhanced and vital training role for Southeast Tech in the region's workforce development system.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Southeast Tech Strategic Vision Plan occurs in three phases, each of which are guided by an engaged Planning Committee of representatives from Southeast Tech faculty and staff, leaders from the business community, and other committed stakeholders.

Phase 1: Project Initiation and Stakeholder Input

This first phase of the process focused on reviewing previous planning efforts and strategic goal setting work that has been done over the past decade. An online survey, individual interviews, and focus groups were conducted to help identify opportunities, challenges, and strategic priorities for Southeast Tech. The input gathered was used to inform the report and the subsequent phases of this process.

Phase 2: Strategic Assessment

The Strategic Assessment reported the findings and feedback gathered during the stakeholder input sessions, along with a review of past strategic processes. The Assessment provided a concise narrative that outlined the strategic implications of the research. During a facilitated session with the Strategic Planning Committee, members were asked to focus on high-level goals and objectives that informed development of this draft Strategic Vision Plan and ensured that the strategic recommendations were well-informed, relevant, and appropriate.

Phase 3: Strategic Vision Plan

Understanding that the core questions of this process are “what does Southeast Tech want to be?” and “what does the region need it to be?” this draft Strategic Vision Plan provides a framework for answering those questions and outlining the goals and objectives necessary to achieve desired results. These goals and objectives emerged from the research and Strategic Project Committee discussions, supplemented by Market Street’s perspective on institutional best practices and structural dynamics. Accompanying these will be high-level tactical opportunities for Southeast Tech administration, faculty, staff, and governing leadership to consider and formalize during strategic implementation.

DRAFT STRATEGIC VISION PLAN

Southeast Tech has the potential through the effective implementation of its strategic vision to enhance its role and capacity to assist in the development of a sustainable supply of trained workers to support continued regional economic growth and wealth creation. By building stronger relationships with partners across the spectrum of local public and private entities, the Institute can exert a more active and visible leadership role in the Sioux Falls area's workforce development system.

Strategic Assessment

The Strategic Assessment was comprised by **two principal sections**. The first looked at the history of recent strategic planning at Southeast Tech while the second incorporated analysis of Southeast Tech's strategic planning history and current challenges and opportunities from the perspective of public, private, and institutional leaders and stakeholders in the Sioux Falls area.

STRATEGIC ACTIVITY REVIEW

- The majority of tasks from Southeast Tech's previous five-year strategic plan in 2005 were accomplished by 2008, so the school switched to annual strategic planning. Efforts have principally on priority areas of Student Success, Collaborative Relationships, and Leverage Resources.
- The challenge of assessing Southeast Tech's strategic attainment was that performance metrics were tracked internally but not reported publically. Data was also not tied to strategic development or implementation measurement.
- Public performance-tracking assessments principally included the reporting of activity measures and not quantifiable metrics. Quantifiable goals included unduplicated headcount and student retention rates. Southeast Tech met its enrollment goal twice during this time period, in 2009-10 and 2011-12. Retention goals were met in both academic years since it became a benchmark.

QUALITATIVE THEMES AND ANALYSIS

- Southeast Tech was consistently praised for producing well-trained graduates for in-demand career fields and its high placement rate. Affordability, facilities, and faculty were also among identified strengths.
- However, serious concerns over the Institute's governance structure, sustainability and enhancement capacity, and degree and course transferability are impacting its overall efficacy and future impact and capacity.
- Extremely tight labor market and reported biases against technical careers have also exacerbated shortages. Ultimately, Southeast Tech's output of graduates is limited by a shortage of "bodies in the seats." In other words, difficulties attracting a sufficient number of students to fill program slots and meet demand have been detrimental to Southeast Tech's impact on regional workforce capacity.

KEY RESEARCH TAKEAWAYS

- Southeast Tech is the best positioned, most experienced, and accomplished asset the region can leverage to align workforce training with the ongoing needs of area businesses. This is in the face of the fact that South Dakota is the only state that does NOT have or support a statewide community college system.
- Interestingly, however, issues other than programmatic capacity and focus were identified as the most strategically relevant. These included:
 - Promotion of Southeast Tech and its programs;
 - The Institute's relationships with and support from regional businesses and school district officials;
 - Regional and statewide perception of the value of technical education;
 - Resource capacity; and
 - Governance dynamics.
- Ultimately, Southeast Tech's strategy development and implementation assessment must be informed by quantifiable and publically reported performance measurements.

Mission and Vision

A component of Southeast Tech's 2016 Strategic Vision Plan is the confirmation and refreshing of the institution's Mission and Vision statements. Market Street worked with the Project Committee to discuss and refine these statements to ensure that they reflect Southeast Tech's core values, institutional purpose, and future goals.

MISSION STATEMENT

(to be confirmed at January 13 meeting)

VISION STATEMENT

(to be confirmed at January 13 meeting)

Strategic Structure

Proposed strategic goal areas suggested by project research were confirmed through voting and discussion at the Project Committee’s December 2015 meeting. The four goals and associated objectives are interrelated and must be pursued under a coordinated implementation framework. Many strategic activities in individual goal areas have direct correlation to the potential success of tactics in another goal category. Thus, Southeast Tech’s Strategic Vision Plan should not be seen as a collection of differentiated goals and objectives but rather as an integrated program of work to be coordinated by Southeast Tech with the support of public and private partners from across the Sioux Falls region and statewide. Currently, the goals are ordered **alphabetically** and not by priority. The Project Committee will have the option to reorder the strategic structure based on changing priorities in the future.

The following graphic displays the structure of Southeast Tech’s draft Strategic Vision Plan:



1.0 Institutional Management

One of the themes of the Strategic Vision Plan public input process was the continuing need for Southeast Tech to optimally engage its faculty, staff, and students in institutional processes, planning, and promotion. Complementing external communications with a more formalized internal program that can better incorporate feedback from Southeast Tech constituencies into institutional strategy and implementation will boost morale, improve internal and external perceptions, and increase the likelihood that stakeholders will promote Southeast Tech to their networks of influence. Institutional planning at all levels must purposefully and publically leverage robust and defensible data to inform decision-making and ensure that programmatic and operational expenditures are fully defensible and can demonstrate tangible return on investment. This will not only foster effective implementation of Southeast Tech's Strategic Vision Plan but also support the Institute's ongoing accreditation.

1.1 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

GOAL: Southeast Tech will effectively and strategically leverage perspectives of internal constituencies.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

1.1.1 Formalize and maintain dynamic internal communications tools and processes.

- While external relationship building is important, the perspectives of those who work and study at Southeast Tech are vital to ensuring that the school is able to retain quality faculty and staff as well as students. It is not enough to just listen to internal stakeholders; positive and responsive actions must also be taken to address concerns and pursue opportunities.
- Southeast Tech currently conducts a number of surveys to assess the satisfaction of its principal internal constituency groups. Use of the Student Satisfaction Inventory as well as employee satisfaction survey should be maintained and enhanced as necessary. Leaders in each constituency category should be involved in discussions on how to optimize these tools.
- Southeast Tech administration should be purposeful in following up with students, faculty, and staff to communicate the findings of surveys and how they will be addressed. Data-driven performance assessment on identified issues and associated actions should also be generated and reported, perhaps through regular internal correspondences or tracking reports delivered electronically to all Institute accounts.

1.1.2 Involve internal stakeholders in strategic implementation and adjustment.

- The perspectives of Southeast Tech faculty, staff, and students were strongly leveraged in the development of this Strategic Vision Plan. As the Plan is implemented, it will by necessity evolve to meet changing regional dynamics and demands.
- For annual implementation assessments and adjustments, a team of leaders from faculty, staff, and student constituencies should be assembled and involved in discussions and decision-making on Southeast Tech's priorities for the coming year, both internally and externally.

1.2 STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND RETENTION

GOAL: *Southeast Tech will provide a learning environment and support system designed to enrich and retain its student population.*

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

1.2.1 *Explore strategies to provide students a more “collegiate” experience at Southeast Tech.*

- While it faces several constraints to offering a college experience such as those offered at four-year universities, Southeast Tech should continue to explore options to improve student engagement through additional student-focused programs and environments. Already, the Institute offers programs such as student clubs, professional student organizations, student government, suite-style campus apartments, Southeast Tech intramural leagues in partnership with the University of Sioux Falls, and a new 500-seat auditorium.
- To complement existing programs and amenities, the Institute should consider creating a Student Experience Task Force comprised principally of student leaders, but also top faculty and staff. The Task Force would work with administration to leverage best-practices research and information on how to enhance the Southeast Tech “experience” under the current parameters of its governance and funding. A resulting Student Experience Strategy would be advanced under the framework of Southeast Tech’s Vision Plan. Resourcing for development of preferred amenities could be incorporated into the capital resource campaign proposed in Goal 4 of this Vision Plan.
- The Institute could also consider exploring and leveraging new partnerships with local and/or non-local higher-educational institutions and other partners to offer additional extracurricular activities for students. This could include teaming with local health care employers to explore the possibility of an on-campus gym or other amenities.

1.2.2 *Continue to improve student success and retention.*

- With a critical shortage of qualified regional workers and available space in certain of its degree programs, Southeast Tech is correctly focused on ensuring the retention of all its current students. Programs such as the Student Success Center, daycare facilities, tutoring, student counseling, and others provide a strong base of support for student retention.
- New enrollment specifications based on the Entrance Requirement Action Project should be effectively implemented to ensure that students enter Southeast Tech more prepared to succeed. The Institute’s Student Retention Toolkit should also continue to be evaluated in order to engage in continuous improvement of its offerings.
- Importantly, all opportunities to work with the business community to expand the number of internship slots should be pursued to ensure students are motivated to complete their degree programs and enter the workforce. Engagement with business people could also extend to the potential creation of mentorship, job shadowing, and other programs to connect students with private sector leaders.

1.3 INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND ACCREDITATION

GOAL: *Southeast Tech will aspire to meet and exceed established standards for programmatic and facilities requirements.*

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

1.3.1 Maintain faculty certifications and accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) via the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP).

- Southeast Tech was officially accepted into the Higher Learning Commission AQIP process for accreditation in December 2006. Since that time, the school has formalized a comprehensive institutional self-assessment process inclusive of multiple internal and external components, including a Continuous Quality Framework, Self-Directed Quality Improvement Program, and annual Strategic Planning.
- The recommendations in this Strategic Vision Plan are supportive of but not directed towards accreditation. It is assumed that Southeast Tech officials will continue to structure an eight-year cycle of institutional assessment and enhancement to comply with HLC prescriptions. Annually revisiting Vision Plan implementation and identifying necessary adjustments and enhancements should support the broader goals of Southeast Tech's strategic vision while also accomplishing phased tasks required under the HLC process.
- The potential exists to leverage existing or reconfigured teams and committees empaneled under the auspices of AQIP to serve the further purpose of supporting and advancing strategic activities proposed by this Vision Plan.

1.3.2 Continue planning, resourcing, and implementing efforts to provide state-of-the-art facilities and technology to Southeast Tech students.

- Institutional planning in support of AQIP and the mandate to maximize Southeast Tech's impact on regional workforce development by leveraging all available and potential state resources will continue under the framework of the Strategic Vision Plan. This not only includes program development (discussed in detail in Goal 3), but also all efforts to identify and fulfill future facilities and technology needs.
- Enhanced relationships bolstered by more effective institutional marketing and supported by enhanced resource development will help optimize Southeast Tech's campus and technological capacity to best serve its students and Sioux Falls area businesses.

2.0 Marketing and Promotion

Comparatively flat enrollment rates at Southeast Tech in the face of unprecedented regional labor demand ratchets up the urgency for the Institute to elevate its market profile in the minds of potential students and those who influence their matriculation decisions. Input participants noted that South Dakota's other technical institutes more aggressively promote their presence and programs to individuals and companies, whether through in-person engagements, multi-media campaigns, or word-of-mouth referrals. While this can partially be attributed to the greater role these institutes play in communities without the population or employment diversity of Sioux Falls – and the resulting increased promotional capacity – Southeast Tech must nevertheless redouble efforts to connect with K-12 districts, guidance counselors and parents, employers, alumni, state and local officials, and other voices who can direct students to a future at Southeast Tech. Plugging into existing campaigns such as Build Dakota, Dakota Roots, SD MyLife, and others can reduce marketing costs, expand the breadth of Southeast Tech efforts, and improve the coordination of external messaging. On the private sector side, the latest Forward Sioux Falls work plan – a partnership of the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce and Sioux Falls Development Foundation (SFDF) – is strongly focused on workforce development as a key regional strategy and identifies Southeast Tech as a critical partner in these efforts.

2.1 ADVOCATES AND INFLUENCERS

GOAL: Southeast Tech will effectively leverage individuals who can inform and influence student decision making.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

2.1.1 Inform marketing efforts by incorporating the perspectives and preferences of high school student leaders.

- It would benefit Southeast Tech to leverage the perspectives and preferences of its *potential* student population as well as its existing enrollees.
- As such, efforts should be undertaken to work with faculty and administrators from public and private Sioux Falls area high schools to identify top student candidates for membership on a Student Advisory Committee. Membership would be changed annually.
- The Committee would be leveraged to inform both Institutional Management in terms of campus environment and amenities as well as Marketing and Promotion to ensure that potential Southeast Tech students are effectively engaged and recruited.

2.1.2 Institutionalize the capacity to best reach and leverage high school teachers and advisors.

- Building and maintaining relationships with those in secondary education who can effectively direct potential students to Southeast Tech will require dedicated capacity to initiate and

sustain these partnerships. Thus, it is proposed that Southeast Tech hire a High School Liaison to manage these ongoing relationships.

- The Liaison will pursue strong working relationships with faculty and advisors in all public and private Sioux Falls area high schools. This will entail outreach not only during regular school hours, but also at after-school and summer sessions, engagements, meetings, and other venues.
- Through these relationships, the Liaison will regularly provide high school “influencers” with the information on current and planned Southeast Tech programs necessary to ensure they can effectively guide their students and advisees towards successful higher educational paths.
- It is likely that the Liaison will be charged with administering and managing the Pre-K to 12 administrator and faculty communications mechanism proposed in Action 3.1.2.

2.1.3 Determine the most effective way to communicate to and support parents of potential Southeast Tech students.

- A purposeful outreach process should be conducted to identify and communicate with parent leaders in Sioux Falls area schools. District faculty, administrators, staff, and students could serve as effective bridges between Southeast Tech officials and key local parent leaders.
- Once identified, these parents should be leveraged as valuable advisors to help design a formal and sustainable outreach and communications process for Southeast Tech to effectively engage and leverage parents to discuss technical education opportunities with their children.
- It is likely that a plan will need to be developed to create data-supported talking points to enable Southeast Tech officials to positively influence parents on technical education programs and prospects. This information can then be utilized by parents in their discussions with other parents and students.
- As Southeast Tech evolves its working relationships with parents, opportunities to formalize parent engagement through some type of advisory council or curriculum to inform outreach and discussions should be assessed and pursued as necessary.

2.1.4 Better utilize Southeast Tech alumni as promoters and supporters of the institution.

- More robust capacity should be created at Southeast Tech to ensure that graduates of the school can serve as effective advocates for technical education in the Sioux Falls area and beyond. While a Southeast Tech Alumni Association is referenced on the school’s website and a Facebook link to the Association is provided, no posts have been made to the page since January 2013 and the link to the Association page on the Southeast Tech site is not functioning.
- It would benefit Southeast Tech to reinvigorate its Alumni Association, potentially through the hiring of a full-time alumni coordinator. Incentives for alumni participation could include local shopping discounts, lower-cost access to continuing education classes or tuition for children and spouses, full access to Institute libraries and online resources, and others. At the very least, some type of Alumni Board could be created and leveraged to complement the annual Outstanding Alumni Award program.

- Additional opportunities to engage Southeast Tech alumni could include an alumni newsletter, dedicated web page or portal on the Southeast Tech website, and special events and social get-togethers.
- Alumni could also be strongly leveraged in the capital campaign proposed in Goal 4 of this Vision Plan.

2.2 CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

GOAL: Southeast Tech will continue to optimize a multi-media campaign to promote the school to regional and non-local audiences.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

2.2.1 Commit resources to refresh Southeast Tech's marketing message and campaign.

- Based on the assessments of this Strategic Vision Plan process, the message of Southeast Tech's student and community benefit could be more strongly and convincingly articulated.
- While a full strategic marketing development process is likely not necessary, it would still benefit the Institute to conduct targeted stakeholder outreach to inform a refreshed promotional message and campaign. The efficacy of media utilized for the existing campaign should be assessed as part of this stakeholder engagement process. Existing and proposed advisory committees and task forces proposed in this Vision Plan should also be leveraged in the research process.
- As part of the refreshing of Southeast Tech's marketing programs, its Tech Ed Works for Me campaign with Forward Sioux Falls should also be assessed and optimized.
- Ultimately, research and communications will inform the development of Southeast Tech's new promotional campaign and multi-media platforms leveraged to disseminate the message.

2.2.2 Implement and evolve the Southeast Tech marketing campaign.

- In addition to supporting relationship-based marketing, it will require additional resources to more effectively communicate Southeast Tech's benefit to key constituencies. Therefore, identification and development of additional resource opportunities as proposed in Goal 4 of this Vision Plan will be necessary.
- On an ongoing basis, the Southeast Tech Advisory Board, Advisory Committees and/or Task Forces, business leaders, economic development entities like SFDF and the Sioux Falls Area Chamber, secondary school officials, faculty, and advisors, parents, existing and potential students, and other existing/proposed communications entities should be leveraged to assess marketing campaign efficacy and to inform any adjustments to promotional messages, tools, and media.

2.3 COORDINATED MESSAGING

GOAL: Southeast Tech will ensure its promotional efforts are supported by and coordinated with all other municipal, regional, and statewide marketing efforts.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

2.3.1 Regularly and effectively communicate Southeast Tech's promotional programming to key partners.

- With South Dakota and its metropolitan areas experiencing dire workforce shortages, efforts to promote the state and regions to talent – both internal to South Dakota and outside the state – are pervasive. These include the City of Sioux Falls' "Sioux Falls Has Jobs" campaign, the aforementioned Tech Ed Works for Me program and other Forward Sioux Falls efforts, and statewide initiatives such as Build Dakota, Dakota Roots, and SD MyLife.
- To the extent that partner campaigns do or would incorporate institute-specific content, Southeast Tech should continuously ensure that this content is reflective of the Institute's current messaging and programmatic offerings.
- Southeast Tech representatives should therefore maintain constant communications with all key promotional partners to optimize current content and advocate for inclusion of Southeast Tech in targeted marketing efforts.

3.0 Programs and Partnerships

Ultimately, the efficacy of Southeast Tech's role in greater Sioux Falls' workforce development system will come down to the degrees, certificates, and specialized training programs it offers and how aligned they are with regional employer needs. As such, the creation, resourcing, and optimization of training programs must continue to be a defensible, formalized process, albeit with enhanced use and reporting of data and analysis. To best inform program development and articulation, more must be done to strengthen existing relationships, develop new partnerships, and explore more formalized agreements that can increase matriculation rates, provide improved transferability of course credits, and bolster graduate output and placement rates in the Sioux Falls area's most in-demand occupations. While some input participants and Institute personnel lobbied for Southeast Tech to have more of a programmatic specialization, that ambition is difficult in a Sioux Falls area economy much more diverse than the other technical institute communities. That said, the school would benefit from more directly and effectively articulating its programmatic vision.

3.1 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

GOAL: Southeast Tech will secure and sustain partnerships that best align training with demand.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

3.1.1 Develop and manage productive relationships with Sioux Falls area companies and business groups.

- Currently, Southeast Tech leverages business representatives for service on its Board of Directors, Advisory Board, and Advisory Committees for specific program areas. However, some regional leaders feel that it is difficult to sustain high levels of employer participation in these groups, especially on committees that inform curriculum development. A number of stakeholders proposed the use of more ad hoc, short-term Task Forces to inform program and curriculum development.
- An initial step towards optimizing Southeast Tech's relationships with business people will be to fully assess and catalogue all existing formal and informal relationships between the school and area companies. The inventory should include companies participating as program-development advisors, Advisory Board and Committee members, and those committing resources to the Institute.
- Southeast Tech should then outreach to existing and potential business partners to assess their preference for sustainable engagement with the college. This should also include working with the Sioux Falls Development Foundation and Sioux Falls Chamber as key conduits to private sector leaders. The current Southeast Tech Advisory Board should be leveraged in these discussions and decisions. Based on this feedback, a process and protocol should be established to formalize sustainable private-sector partnerships for all Southeast Tech departments. These could even be program-specific if necessary.

- To best sustain the chosen business partnership model, Southeast Tech should consider creating a top-level Administrative position to develop and coordinate Business Relationships. The position would be principally responsible for ensuring the Institute's partnerships with Sioux Falls area businesses are strong and sustainable. To inform ongoing outreach and relationships with companies in the region, the administrator would manage a database of Sioux Falls areas employers categorized by business sector. He or she would also regularly communicate with business volunteers to ensure that formal relationships with company representatives and the Institute are as productive as possible.

3.1.2 Formalize a mechanism to regularly communicate with Pre-K to 12 administrators and faculty.

- Broadening its relationship with Sioux Falls Public Schools and other local districts would help Southeast Tech strengthen its role in the regional workforce development "pipeline." An initial step would be to research and catalogue existing relationships. This will entail surveying Southeast Tech faculty, staff, and administration to build a spreadsheet of current formal and informal working relationships between the Institute and all regional public and private districts and schools.
- Based on this inventory, key Pre-K to 12 representatives should be identified to help discuss and inform the development of an ongoing communications format between Southeast Tech and local districts. These could include regular meetings of a discussion roundtable, more specialized communications committees, annual summits, or some other function.
- The chosen communications tool(s) should inform ongoing working relationships between Southeast Tech and its public and private primary, elementary, and secondary school partners. This would include maintenance of an ongoing relationships spreadsheet initiated during the research phase of this action. These relationships would be leveraged to inform and optimize creation and management of joint programming between Southeast Tech and regional districts.

3.2 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Southeast Tech will design and deliver training to effectively support economic growth and worker advancement.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

3.2.1 More intentionally and publically utilize data to inform program development.

- Training programs at Southeast Tech are not created in a data vacuum. However, many stakeholders are not aware of the data used to inform degree development nor the quantitative assessments used to refine them on an ongoing basis.
- Southeast Tech would benefit from institutionalizing protocols for the use of data in program development/enhancement and commit to greater public transparency in reporting these data and how they are utilized.

3.2.2 Continue processes to provide the optimal catalogue of Southeast Tech degree programs.

- Currently, Southeast Tech offers 50 unique degree programs; most are designated as Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees. While, as noted, some feel that Southeast Tech should become more specialized in its training, this is not consistent with the demands of the Sioux Falls area's diverse economy. Even so, Southeast Tech would benefit from better articulating this reality to stakeholders across the region. There may also be benefit in more directly aligning with the target industry categories pursued by the region's Forward Sioux Falls economic development marketing program.
- Through the auspices of this Strategic Vision Plan, Southeast Tech should continue to conduct evaluations of current degree programs and leverage existing and proposed relationships with businesses to identify new training opportunities and enhancements to existing programs. This includes partnerships with Sioux Falls area high schools to design and offer dual-degree options and "2+2" training programs for students looking to transition more quickly into the regional workforce after graduation.

3.2.3 Maximize short-term and customizable training opportunities at the Training Solutions Institute (TSI).

- TSI is a critical regional resource that provides students with certifications or licensure, individual skills development, and customized/contract training for companies and organizations. Training Solutions' flexibility and responsiveness makes it an important partner for economic development professionals and businesses looking to upskill their current workforce or accommodate additional hiring.
- However, this process' Strategic Assessment revealed that many survey participants from the business community were unaware of the customizable programming opportunities available at TSI. Training Solutions and its programs should be integral components of the marketing and promotional activities proposed in Goal 2 of this Vision Plan.
- Southeast Tech's AAS programs and the certifications, licensure, and company-specific training provided by TSI should be seen as a complementary continuum of services rather than separate resources and be planned as such. Relationship building with industry should therefore involve directing companies towards the training solution most appropriate to their needs.
- Through its TSI vehicle, Southeast Tech could explore the development and provision of so-called "stackable" credentials that would enable individuals to build a customized portfolio of skill sets based on their personal career paths and acquisition timeframes.
- TSI could also gauge local interest in developing certification "academies" similar to Mitchell Tech's Leadership Academy or Coding Boot Camps.

3.2.4 Continue to provide "gateway" services for Sioux Falls area individuals to enter the regional workforce.

- In addition to its AAS and TSI programs, Southeast Tech staffs the state-funded Hovland Learning Center, an independent learning lab providing self-paced and group classes to meet the needs of students looking to become more employable. In addition to basic skill development, Hovland offers Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) services as well as training for GED attainment.

- With the recent closing of Kilian Community College, non-traditional Sioux Falls area students lost a key resource for skills acquisition and development. Through Hovland, Southeast Tech has the opportunity to satisfy these services for both native- and foreign-born residents. Southeast Tech should therefore seek to work with Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota, the Multi-Cultural Center, and other partners to direct interested individuals towards programs providing important “gateway” skills for entering the local workforce.
- There are also opportunities to expand and/or replicate innovative programs like the Training Solutions Institute’s partnership with the City of Sioux Falls Workforce Development that led to the development of a pilot program for Immigrant/Refugee Awareness and Skills Training.

3.3 PROGRAM ARTICULATION

GOAL: Southeast Tech will continuously and creatively seek to provide students with degree transferability options.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

3.3.1 Pursue potential articulation partnerships with public and private South Dakota colleges and universities.

- Currently, Southeast Tech has degree-articulation agreements with public and private schools in South Dakota. Select Southeast Tech programs are transferable to private institutions including Bellevue University, Dakota Wesleyan University, Mount Marty College, Presentation College, and the University of Sioux Falls. On the public side, a number of Southeast Tech healthcare programs are transferable to the University of South Dakota, which also has reverse articulation agreements with Southeast Tech¹. South Dakota State has articulation agreements with Southeast Tech for ten programs across a spectrum of subject areas².
- Southeast Tech should continue to seek and enhance articulation agreements with private colleges, while fully exploring new degree-transfer partnership opportunities with state four-year institutions. Southeast Tech officials – potentially in partnership with other South Dakota technical institutes – should work with legislators, staff, economic development organizations like SFDF and the Sioux Falls Chamber, and the legal community to study all viable options for articulation agreements between technical institutes and the state’s public four-year universities.
- Based on the study, Southeast Tech should identify programs with the greatest value for transferability and work with all requisite partners to ensure that articulation agreements are signed between the Institute and South Dakota public universities.

¹ <http://www.usd.edu/health-sciences/health-sciences-major/sti-articulation-agreements>

² <http://www.sdstate.edu/academic/resource/seti-articulation-agreements.cfm>

4.0 Resource Sustainability

If Southeast Tech is to fulfill its mission and vision, it must have the resources necessary to accomplish these goals. The upcoming state referendum on the status of South Dakota's technical institutes could be the start of a process to increase direct state contributions to these schools and expand their flexibility to identify and pursue additional sources of revenue. Currently, however, the most viable means for Southeast Tech to expand its capacity to develop programs, enhance the student experience, finance new and renovated facilities, and market its offerings is to receive public, private, and philanthropic contributions, likely through a more aggressive leveraging of the Southeast Tech Foundation, among other strategies. Success will partially be determined by the ability of Southeast Tech to be seen and embraced by the community as a more dynamic regional asset; this will be affected by relationship-building and marketing tactics featured earlier in this Strategic Vision Plan.

4.1 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

GOAL: Southeast Tech will support and influence efforts to reform technical institute governance and funding in South Dakota.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

4.1.1 Ensure the fall 2016 state technical institute referendum is effectively worded and promoted to secure its passage.

- South Dakota's workforce crisis has increased the pressure on lawmakers to reform the state's technical institute system. This has led to the placement on the November 2016 ballot of a referendum officially recognizing the distinctive status of South Dakota's two-year training institutions.
- Southeast Tech should join with its sister institutes and other partners to positively influence the language and intent of the November referendum. The initiative should provide short-term flexibility for institute governance and funding as well as set up future legislation optimizing these processes.
- Collaboration should extend to efforts that most effectively promote the technical institute referendum to ensure its passage.

4.1.2 Engage and leverage partnerships to design and advance future statewide legislative efforts.

- Passage of the November 2016 referendum would be the first step of a longer-term process to position technical education in South Dakota for success. Establishing technical institutes as separate and distinct entities would naturally lead to opportunities to optimize their governance and funding.

- Southeast Tech should continue to position itself as a key partner to inform, identify, design, promote, and help pass legislation to level the playing field for South Dakota technical institutes with two-year training institutions in competitor states.

4.2 RESOURCE CAMPAIGN

GOAL: Southeast Tech will secure public and private contributions to enhance its capacity to prepare the region's workforce.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

4.2.1 Build support for the initiation and launch of a Southeast Tech resource campaign.

- While the other South Dakota technical institutes leverage resource campaigns to supplement state funding and tuition receipts, their location in smaller, less economically diverse communities raises their profiles as critically important local assets. This increases the likelihood that resource campaigns will be supported and successful.
- Relationship building and promotional efforts proposed in this Vision Plan will ideally help Southeast Tech enhance its community standing and perceived value in the Sioux Falls area. This will be necessary to lay the groundwork for an institutional resource campaign.
- Before publically announcing its campaign, Southeast Tech should outreach to regional governmental, economic development, and education and workforce partners to enlist support for a future effort. This will be necessary because many of these entities could be concerned that a Southeast Tech resource campaign would adversely affect their own fundraising.
- The Institute should utilize the Southeast Tech Foundation to fund implementation of this Strategic Vision Plan. This would entail repurposing or replacing the Foundation's Annual Fund drive and also expanding the mission of the Foundation (see Action 4.3.1) beyond scholarship funding to include a focus on new staff, programs, and facilities.

4.2.2 Design, implement, and sustain a Southeast Tech resource campaign.

- While either a new or expanded resource campaign for Southeast Tech would be unique to the institution, it would be instructive to research and assess the campaigns of other South Dakota technical institutes as well as those from out-of-state technical schools to inform its dynamics. It may also be necessary to secure the assistance of a professional fundraising firm to support the Southeast Tech Foundation's efforts.
- A number of proposed actions in this Vision Plan can serve a dual purpose of linking Southeast Tech with potential contributors to a resource campaign. These are principally the relationship-building activities with businesses and alumni. These opportunities should be incorporated as components of a Southeast Tech resource campaign if pursued.
- Though some institutional resource campaigns are conducted annually, many are initiated in multi-year cycles. During the outreach and research phases of campaign design, Southeast Tech should determine the optimal frequency of its fundraising to ensure that receipts are not only sustainable but also sensitive to the campaigns of regional partners.

4.3 GRANTS AND PHILANTHROPY

GOAL: Southeast Tech will consistently and aggressively pursue resources from philanthropic, institutional, and governmental funders.

TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES:

4.3.1 Maximize the impact of the Southeast Tech Foundation.

- As noted action 4.2.1, the purpose of the Foundation is currently to secure resources for student scholarships. To leverage it as the principal fundraising tool supporting the implementation of Southeast Tech's strategic vision, the Foundation's mission will need to be broadened to include responsibilities for satisfying or allaying costs for multiple expenditure categories. It will also need additional capacity to be able to accommodate this enhanced role.
- The Southeast Tech Foundation Board should be fully leveraged in discussions on the entity's current and proposed contributions to the resourcing of the school's strategic needs and opportunities.

4.3.2 Continue identifying and securing high-impact governmental and non-profit grants.

- Southeast Tech has demonstrated success in seeking out, applying for, and winning competitive grant awards. These funds are important supplements to dedicated sources and can often make or break the Institute's ability to capitalize new programs and initiatives.
- Consideration should be given to retaining or contracting for full-time capacity to pursue and secure grants from all eligible sources. In addition, Southeast Tech should continue to reach out to all potential partners to explore opportunities to jointly apply for high-dollar grants.

CONCLUSION

Southeast Technical Institute serves an indispensable role in the development of a competitive regional workforce in Sioux Falls. It is the best positioned, most experienced, and accomplished asset the region can leverage to align workforce training with the ongoing needs of Sioux Falls area businesses. Looking to the future, Southeast Tech is the appropriate Sioux Falls area entity to provide transferrable two-year credit programs to the state's public universities. It has a proven track record and can be even more important once its governance issues are effectively addressed.

The four strategic goal areas proposed in this draft Vision Plan are all important and interrelated. It will be difficult to achieve success in one without effective advancements of the others. This is because of the challenge that technical institutes in South Dakota, particularly Southeast Tech, face because of the state's traditional lack of support for and valuing of these schools. While this dynamic is changing – especially if a referendum is passed in fall 2016 to officially recognize these institutions – the current reality remains that the institutes are largely on their own to enhance their capacity and ability to positively affect local training pipelines. The degree to which the public and private sectors of their home communities provide support above and beyond state contributions will largely determine the institutes' ability to help address crippling workforce shortages across South Dakota.

In Southeast Tech's case, its location in the state's most populous and economically diverse region complicates matters in terms of building improved awareness and engagement of community partners. This is especially true as efforts in the region to develop more traditional community college capacity creates the potential that Southeast Tech's programs could be streamlined or repositioned. However, the legacy and promise demonstrated by Southeast Tech over its history, its strong programmatic offerings and ever-expanding campus facilities and technology, and other notable factors make the school an indispensable cog in the Sioux Falls area's workforce training systems and worthy of greater support and commitments from partners across region.

In the end, the core questions informing this Strategic Vision Plan process – "what does Southeast Tech want to be?" and "what does the region need it to be?" – are not static but rather ongoing and evolving concerns with correspondingly fluid strategic realities, challenges, and opportunities. By institutionalizing partnerships and communications processes through existing and proposed tools contained in this Vision Plan, Southeast Tech will ensure that these questions are asked and answered on an ongoing basis. Importantly, these discussions cannot be limited to internal stakeholders. Southeast Tech must expand the breadth of voices contributing to its living strategy to include a broader array of clients, partners, and current and potential students.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASING

Upon confirmation of the framework and principal recommendations of the draft Strategic Vision Plan, a matrix will be developed detailing a proposed timeline for implementation and the entity(ies) responsible for advancing top-level strategic activities.

ASSESSMENT METRICS

Potential assessment metrics will be discussed at the Vision Plan Project Committee's January 13 meeting, then developed, confirmed, and included in the final Southeast Tech Strategic Vision Plan.