



STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA, MANATEE-SARASOTA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
Carol F. Probstfeld, Ed.D.

September 26, 2023

Chairman Thomson and Members of the Board of Trustees:

As I am in my 11th year as College President, and we are engaged in the second Strategic Plan that articulates my vision as President, I have had ample opportunity to reflect on the comprehensive planning process and the emergent document's utility. Recognizing that many of our Trustees and some executive team members are new to our College's Strategic Plan, this is an optimal time to review the HOW and WHY underlying tonight's "Looking Back, Looking Forward" report.

Our College's Strategic Plan is a sustainable, living, vital tool intended for planning, analysis, and accountability. It is not intended to be a stand-alone publication. Experience has taught us that when each iteration of the Strategic Plan purposefully builds on knowledge learned and foundational work done instead of starting over from scratch, our College is best positioned to maintain forward momentum, institutional knowledge, bonding traditions, and a sense of place and purpose in the community.

It pleases me immensely to note that our College is in a strong position at the midpoint of the Boldly Leading Strategic Plan, 2021-2026. My leadership team joins me in our commitment to continue building on our College's cumulative institutional strengths by improving, reinforcing, and adding to our College's infrastructure to increase our capacity, enhance our standing as a respected leader in the community and state, and prepare to foresee and meet future students' needs.

Unprecedented events and stiff headwinds, both literal and figurative, have challenged us during my presidency. I was named President in late 2012 following a sustained period of upheaval that had disrupted the College's connectiveness with our constituents and weakened the deep well of respect and confidence that had been built over 55 years. Then, community and legislative relationships were strained, fundraising was difficult, employee morale was low, and general confusion prevailed about our role and purpose.

Turning it around took bold leadership and the courage to make sweeping changes that were creative, thoughtful, and unapologetically ambitious. Not only did we turn it around, but we did not pause or settle for status quo—we kept reaching higher and making stronger connections. I love this College and I want everyone to share my pride in what we have accomplished.

Starting with Day One of my presidency, I worked tirelessly to reengage the community, reestablish our identity, repair relationships, and restore the community's and employees' faith and pride in our College. I went out and met with people, answered tough questions, and let them know who we are, what we do, and why they should care.

Next, I brought in a consulting firm to conduct a continuous improvement assessment—a deep dive into all departments and operations collegewide. My vision was to engage all employees in eliminating complacency, updating processes, finding efficiencies, and freeing up resources to support a stronger student focus in every department, not only the frontline staff. We were not required by an outside agency to submit ourselves to this rigorous assessment, but it was the right thing to do for our students. We now have an institution that truly uses data to make decisions.

I led my executive team in rethinking all operations with efficiency as key. Recognizing that there always are factors outside our control—hurricanes, political shifts, static state support, national enrollment declines, a pandemic—we focused on creating new approaches and initiatives.

We diversified revenue sources and created new income streams; created protocols for realizing a demonstrable return on investment from outreach activities; thoughtfully redesigned and executed effective legislative and partner communication models; identified facilities to be upgraded or replaced to make all campuses appealing to students; added new and expanded academic programs for the community; increased the ways and times students could access classes and services to support their individual needs; and cultivated a caring family culture within the College community.

We have reclaimed our reputation and a favorable public perception of our College as a vital community resource and preferred go-to source for boards, groups, committees, and reporters seeking professionals and subject matter experts. We have earned the trust and support of community, business, and foundation partners because we do what we say, we deliver on our promises, and we provide a solid rate of return for our students, donors, and taxpayers. Fundraising is at an all-time high. During my presidency, every accreditation effort we have undertaken has resulted in the maximum number of years awarded to the College and its programs. New buildings and a new campus in Parrish are the results of collaborations and our first comprehensive capital campaign for building construction.

We were able to get from then to now, with a long list of recognitions and accolades, thanks to the support of amazing faculty, staff, students, and community partners who had faith in my vision for our College and committed to work alongside me.

I am proud of the strong, dedicated executive staff we have and the senior team members I have hired and developed. They are highly skilled creative thinkers who encourage innovations and who are passionate about student success. I wish everyone could see their excellence like I do.

I am proud of our professional and career staff—often our unsung heroes. From the registration desk to the student helpline to the financial aid counselor to the facilities department crews, they comprise an entire army of student advocates who work with dedication and pride to keep everything running smoothly so students can focus on their academic journeys. I wish everyone knew about their work ethic and devotion to students and the College family like I do.

I am proud of our faculty. Our professors demonstrate their professionalism and commitment to our College and students not only in the classroom but also in the way they go above and beyond to help struggling students and encourage those who lack self-confidence. They really set our College apart with their desire to see students succeed and the personal interest they take in making it happen. Our faculty dedicate their lives to changing students' lives, and I wish the world could see what I see.

I am proud of our partners in the community, foundations, businesses, and our local legislative delegation. I appreciate their willingness to work with us to enhance programs for the community and to invest in us on major new initiatives. Their support makes it possible for us to meet the needs of the workforce and community, and I want everyone to know and appreciate them as I do.

I am proud of our SCF Foundation directors and our College Board of Trustees. They are here because they care about our students. They are helpers and advisors and givers who volunteer their time, their treasure, and their talents to make SCF a better institution and foundation for students to change their lives. But for them we would not have been able to go from good to great. I hope everyone can see these extraordinary treasures that I see.

I am proud of our students. I love getting to know students who are here from around the world for different reasons and from different backgrounds. Everyone has their own path, and fortunately we offer various opportunities, but what I hear most often is that students choose to come here to create a better future for themselves, their children, their families. Many overcome tremendous obstacles to come to our College. Our students humble me and inspire me. I wish everyone could see, as I do, that the future is in good hands.

Doing the right thing for students has been the primary motivating factor in my 21 years here, and knowing that I am where I can make a positive impact on students' lives is what I love most about my job.

Preparing the Strategic Plan review and update presented an opportunity to take stock of my own professional and personal goals and aspirations. I am happy to say that the same motivation that led me to accept the presidency still motivates me every day. Then, I promised that I would wake up every day with the knowledge that I love this College, and that has been the truth.

I am sure I will continue to wake up with that sentiment, but it will be from a different perspective. I consider myself to be the luckiest person alive to have the honor of serving as leader of this great College. The past 11 years as President and 10 years before as Vice President of Finance and

Administration seem to have flown by, but time does not really stand still, and a lot changes with each passing year--in our environment, our families, and in our lives.

As many of you know, my husband recently was declared cancer free and released from treatment after five years, and my brother, who is my only sibling, is regaining his strength after a prolonged serious health scare. My family is small in number but we are very close in our hearts though we live miles apart. None of us is getting younger, and we have not figured out a way to stop time or shorten the distance. It is time now for me to tend to and spend time with them and enjoy the closest relationships of my life--while we have time.

With that, I have decided that this will be my last academic year as President of State College of Florida, this College that I love. You have before you a proposed contract that reflects my intention to retire effective July 1, 2024. During the next nine months you can count on my commitment to remain focused on my responsibilities as President and after as a President Emerita with duties as outlined in the second proposed agreement to ensure a smooth leadership transition and business continuity. I would appreciate your support in accepting my proposals and executing both documents this evening.

You have my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to lead and serve this extraordinary College. It has been my greatest joy and professional honor to reestablish and enhance our position as the community's first choice for higher education, economic development, philanthropic investment, and cultural fulfillment. And you have my promise that I always will be an ardent champion and advocate for State College of Florida.

Thank you.

Carol F. Probstfeld, Ed.D

President
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Manatee-Sarasota