Our Mission
SOWELA Technical Community College provides traditional, distance, and lifelong learning experiences and awards associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates that empower learners in transfer, career, and technical education to excel as globally competitive citizens.

Southwest Louisiana Technical Community College (SOWELA) is in pursuit of excellence.

Like any successful institution we have established a plan for growth that is based on an honest appraisal of what the College is, a clear vision of what it needs to be and have set believable goals on how to achieve the objectives that will provide academic excellence and unlimited opportunity for our students.

Equally important, the SOWELA team and its partners in the community and the region have taken a good hard look at what the area needs in the way of relevant, authentic and practical education. Especially education that equips people with the knowledge and hope to start careers rather than just get jobs. Sustaining the economy of the region is as important to SOWELA as it is to the companies and corporations and individuals working hard to make Southwest Louisiana one of the most vibrant areas of the Country.

We are intent on providing the educational opportunities and expert training needed so that our students are career-ready as a result of their experiences at SOWELA. Whether they are planning to continue their education at four-year institutions or seeking the training necessary to become skilled employees in the marketplace, SOWELA is uniquely positioned to meet those needs.

To that end and in collaboration with our partners in industry, commerce and civic leadership, we have established seven guiding principles to shape SOWELA’s impact over the next five years.

Our priorities aren’t wishful thinking or high-sounding phrases to dress up a strategic plan. They are truly the prism through which the administration, faculty and staff, foundation board, alumni and student leadership will view how we do business, how we deliver education and how we measure the impact we have on the lives we touch and the communities we serve.

We hope you’ll review SOWELA’s seven guiding principles, study the goals and activities we’ve outlined to imbed into our collective corporate psyche and hold us accountable for the vital signs we’ve set forth as measurements of our success.

Dr. Neil Aspinwall,
Chancellor
Goals and Activities

1.1 We will become a mission-driven, comprehensive community college with market-focused programs and services.
- Increase the number of the high-demand credit, non-credit degree and certificate programs that can be completed using a combination of evening, weekend and on-line delivery.
- Create a comprehensive enrollment management plan and system that targets under-served populations and improves access.

1.2 We will emphasize “what matters most” by becoming a “students first” institution.
- Implement a mandatory Freshman Orientation course.
- Develop a comprehensive Student Success Center with a one-stop approach.
- Implement fully the Banner student information system for Registration/Electronic Advising.
- Revamp the “Early Warning System” to help identify “at risk” students.

1.3 We will create new opportunities for student engagement.
- Develop an intramural and intercollegiate sports program that provides recreational and social opportunities.
- Increase the SGA fee to fund health and wellness, recreational, cultural activities and a wide range of services.

Vital Signs
- Enrollment growth
- Student retention
- Graduation rate
- Student survey satisfaction results

“I always wanted to further my education particularly when my son was in high school so I could put him through college.” Diane

While we reconfirm our commitment to being an open access institution, we also need to design systems, processes and policies that ensure the completion of student goals.

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Meaningful partnerships with businesses and universities.
- Develop and implement a professional development luncheon for principals and counselors.
- Establish an Educational Resource Center for parents, principals, teachers and counselors.
- Establish a two-year technical degree transition workshop for veterans, active-duty service members and their dependents.
- Become a Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC).
PRIORITY 3

Enhance our resource development and financial stewardship.

Goals and Activities
3.1 We will increase the total operating revenue.
• Enhance the administrative support of the SOWELA Foundation.
• Research, design and implement a capital campaign.
• Initiate an employee-giving campaign.
• Pursue industry-specific relationships that result in revenue generation.
• Build a capacity to pursue and manage grants and other external funding opportunities.

3.2 We will improve how we allocate scarce resources.
• Enhance the budget development process.
• Decentralize the budget and financial management system by fully implementing Banner Financial.
• Engage in a review of organizational structure to explore cost-saving efficiencies.

Vital Signs
Total operating revenue per student
• SOWELA Foundation asset levels • Employee campaign • Grant funding

PRIORITY 4

Improve our technology and facilities infrastructure.

Goals and Activities
4.1 We will create an evolving physical space that enhances student engagement and learning.
• Update and implement a 20-25 year Campus Master Plan for SOWELA Technical Community College at Lake Charles.
• Create a Campus Master Plan for SOWELA Technical Community College Instructional Site at Jennings.
• Create a process to utilize facility space more efficiently and effectively.
• Develop a plan for health safety and security.
• Create/Update the College Crisis Contingency Plan.

4.2 We will become a technology-infused institution of higher education.
• Create a new information resources and technology plan.
• Update the IT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan.
• Integrate emerging technology to enhance instructional and administrative processes.

Vital Signs
Campus Climate Survey • Bandwidth utilization analysis • Employee Satisfaction on Banner • Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) • Space Utilization • Web Analytics
As a community of higher education professionals, we need to make strategic investments in our human capital so that they can and will catalyze student success.

**PRIORITY 5**

**Invest in the development of our professionals.**

**Goals and Activities**

5.1 We will transform ourselves from a teaching/learning paradigm to a learning/teaching paradigm.
- Create an environment/culture that promotes the knowledge and skills that faculty and staff need to effectively lead.

5.2 We will lead in the development of our professionals.
- Broaden the scope of the Center of Excellence in Teaching to integrate the orientation and internal training needs of faculty and staff.
- Create a Leadership Institute that provides accessible on-going training opportunities.
- Review and improve the performance evaluation system to enhance the overall performance of faculty and staff.

5.3 We will design an organizational structure that can deliver on the call for a new SOWELA.
- Develop a plan to reorganize divisions that align with strategic planning priorities.

**Vital Signs**

Student engagement results (CCSSE) • Faculty/staff surveys • Climate Survey • Professional development and training

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6.1 We will become a forward-thinking, planning-based institution.
- Monitor the implementation of this strategic plan over its five-year cycle.
- Develop a SACS COC approved Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

6.2 We will seek to assess all critical institutional programs, processes and outcomes.
- Use existing surveys (CCSSE, SENSE, SRI) as well as generating feedback from non-returning students and graduating students to identify opportunities for improvement.
- Create an annual satisfaction survey for students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and alumni employers.
- Create a dashboard that provides access to data that helps promote accountability and catalyzes change.
- Develop and distribute (web and print) a focused SOWELA Fact Book that promotes a management-by-fact culture.
- Design, develop, and implement internal program/unit reviews to assure appropriate program/unit performance and link to budgeting.

**Vital Signs**

Conversation on College and Community • Regional and Programmatic Accreditations • Retention rates • Graduation rates • Placement rates • Community engagement rates • Identification of community needs
PRIORITY 7

Build the brand of the new SOWELA.

Goals and Activities

7.1 We will define and build a brand that is authentic and relevant.
   • Determine who our customers are, their needs and why they need what SOWELA has to offer.
   • Determine why SOWELA is uniquely positioned to provide educational and career training opportunities.
   • Define and target specific customer groups and align the brand message to maximize interest and response.

7.2 We will build a comprehensive integrated marketing communications strategy that articulates and promotes the brand.
   • Develop a cross-divisional marketing advisory council that will help determine marketing communications priorities, budget, and expected results.
   • Standardize the brand message so that the College speaks as one voice.
   • Build an ever-growing inventory of high quality communications materials and technologies that are integrated and mutually supportive in adding value to the brand.
   • Redesign and configure the Web presence so that the look and content is customer oriented in scope and mobile device compatible; research, select and purchase a Content Management System (CMS) to facilitate timely content development and ease of navigation.

7.3 We will develop a social media strategy that will promote dialogue with existing and potential customers.
   • Develop an infrastructure for the creation and maintenance of a social media effort so that there is central ownership but with broad based involvement from the College community.
   • Create a social media strategy that defines how social media will be used and maintained.
   • Develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program to capture, analyze and use customer information to help shape customer interaction and loyalty.

Vital Signs

The emergence of a consistent brand message • Increased enrollment, business partnerships and funding support • Growing inventory of high quality integrated communications materials and technologies • Increased community involvement and support • Measurable increase in social media contacts • Developing customer response metrics

Want To Improve Your Skills... and be ready for a good paying job?

SOWELA’s reputation is its brand. However and wherever that brand is encountered it must be reliable, deliver the same benefits and express integrity and value.

Located in Lake Charles, SOWELA serves the Southwest Louisiana region in preparing students for employment or university transfer. SOWELA also offers non-credit workforce training and business support. By partnering with businesses in designing and delivering customized, short-term, non-credit industry based training, SOWELA graduates are well equipped with the skills needed to obtain employment.
In the fall of 2012, we began the process of developing a new strategic plan for our institution. The previous plan was a five-year effort that ran from 2008 to 2013. It had six goals and a series of strategies associated with each of the goals that helped to advance significantly the College. Nonetheless, several significant events—the change of SOWELA from a technical college to a community college, the application for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation, and the appointment of new Chancellor—made the development of a new comprehensive strategic plan even more important to the future of the College and its stakeholders.

The following three stages were developed and used to draft an inclusive, transparent, comprehensive and integrated strategic plan for 2013 to 2018.

1. Information Gathering
   - This initial phase involved the identification and analyses of data that served to inform the drafting of the strategic plan.
   - Secondary Research
     - An environmental scan was used to enumerate studies and reports that involve political, economic, social and technological trends.
   - Primary Research
     - Interviews conducted with key internal stakeholders—College Administrative Council.
     - Retreat conducted with Strategic Planning Committee.
     - “A Conversation on College and Community” conducted with key external stakeholders. October-December 2012

2. Themetic Tests
   - The Information Gathering phase resulted in language and ideas around mission, vision, values, priorities, strategies and so on. This phase involved the testing of themes within the college community.
   - Methods for generating feedback included:
     - Presentations to key internal stakeholder groups and review by Strategic Planning Committee.
     - Post materials for comments on the website for review and comment. January-February 2013

3. Drafting the Plan
   - This next phase involved the development of the plan itself. It was an exercise that involved the following decisions:
     - Identify the number and type of priorities.
     - Choose the format and language.
     - Establish vital signs.
     - Decide on publications and e-media.
     - Align with Louisiana Community & Technical College System.
     - Develop an overall communications strategy. March-April 2013

The implementation of the strategic plan will be critical to its success. SOWELA’s intranet will host a strategic planning area, individuals and groups will be assigned responsibility for the priorities and action items, vital signs will be monitored, and an institutional dashboard created. Finally, a communications strategy will be executed such that all stakeholders remain aware of the plan and the progress being made.
In deep appreciation for their input, advice and involvement in the development of the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, SOWELA is greatly appreciative of its friends and partners.

Larry DeRoussel, Executive Director, Lake Area Industry Alliance • Christopher Duncan, Mayor, Sulphur, LA • John Cardone, Administrator, City of Lake Charles • Julio Galan, President and CEO, Family and Youth Counseling Agency • Reuben Gaithright, System Engineer/CIO, Superior Supply and Steel • Deborah Guillory, Outreach Coordinator, SWLA Center for Health Services • Anthony Iannone, Employment Manager, L'auberge du Lac Casino Resort • Ann Knapp, Assistant Vice President/Financial Advisor, Merrill Lynch and SOWELA Foundation Board member • Donald Lloyd, Administrator, CHRISTUS St. Patrick Hospital • Dr. Neil Matkin, Executive Vice President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System • Clyde Mitchell, Customer Service Manager, Entergy • Kevin Mitchell, Vice President, Northrop Grumman • Ronnie Petree, Senior Vice President, St. Martin Bank and Trust • Greg Raynor, Chief Financial Officer, Coushatta • Wayne Savoy, Superintendent Calcasieu Parish School Board • Jimmy Sawtelle, Senior Vice President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System • George Swift, President/CEO SWLA Chamber of Economic Development Alliance • Norman Thomas, Pastor, New Life Church International • Dr. Philip C. Williams, President, McNeese State University