

# **PUGET SOUND SKILLS CENTER A STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE January 2010**

The Puget Sound Skills Center (PSSC) was the first skills center in the state of Washington and, as such, has been recognized as a career training leader in many areas. It has been a true leader and solution for thousands of students who have gone on to be successful in the community. Many students return to the skills center and provide glowing remarks about their education and the 'chance for success' they received from their respected and caring instructors. The Puget Sound Skills Center has also been a workforce solution for many of the local businesses. In addition, the skills center has been a model for other skill centers in the state.

The Puget Sound Skills Center is engaged in a task that will shape the strategic future of our skills center and the services it offers the students and the community. In doing so, PSSC is contacting many stakeholders for input, suggestions, and as sounding boards. Please take the time to review where we are in the planning process.

## **JANUARY UPDATE**

**Sue Shields, Director of Puget Sound Skills Center**

### **I. Structure of the Planning Process**

The Strategic Planning process is a participative proactive process to effectively manage change leading to enduring success of the Puget Sound Skills Center (PSSC). This planning process is focused on the needs of the students, sending schools, the community and business partners. The skills center is seeking wide stakeholder participation, data-based decision making, and the creation of a strategic map for the future.

#### **• THE SUPERINTENDENT BOARD**

- Sets direction
- Recommends Strategic Plan to Boards of sending schools
- Directs attention & resources for implementation
- Monitors progress & performance

#### **• STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE**

- Oversees and shapes the planning process
- Provides data and expertise to PSSC Planning Teams
- Prepares recommended Strategic Plan to the Superintendent Board
- Creates the conditions in the organization to mobilize, execute and align the center around strategic priorities

#### **• PSSC PLANNING TEAMS (SUPERINTENDENT BOARD, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, PSSC FACULTY AND STAFF, PLANNING TEAM, COMMUNITY MEMBERS)**

- Engages in strategic planning process and serves an advisory function
- Analyzes existing and selected data sources
- Recommends focus areas, goals for strategic plan
- Considers feedback from Loop-outs

### **II. Calendar of Past Events for the Planning Process**

### **Steering Committee (September-October)**

- Planning outcome, process, roles, and communication approach (branding) drafted
- Planning Teams membership, sessions, and data collection discussed

### **Initial Data Collection Session: Superintendents (October)**

- Overviewed approach to Strategic Planning
- Conducted SWOT survey (qualitative data)
- Conducted Strategic Conversations
- Vision, Mission, Values discussed

### **Steering Committee (October-November)**

- Extant data compiled, key findings and implications drafted (quantitative data)
- Internal Interviews conducted (Staff)

### **Data Collection Sessions: Selected Communities (November-January)**

- Benchmarked with Francis Tuttle
- Overviewed approach to Strategic Planning and conduct SWOT survey
- Conducted Strategic Conversations with communities (qualitative data)
  - Friends of PSSC
  - Faculty and Staff
  - Educational Leadership (January 7 with Dr. Kay Martin, former Superintendent of Francis Tuttle)

### **Planning Team (March and April):**

- Vision, Mission, Core Values created
- Data analyzed
- Recommendations made for Goals and Strategies
- Focus areas and Goals refined (include all feedback)
- Strategies drafted, KPI's suggested
- Priorities recommended
- Initial document drafted:
- Implementation discussed/Action Planning

## **OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

### **Strategic Planning**

The framework of the PSSC Strategic Planning process involves clarifying of the vision of "where we want to be", the mission of "who we are", the current situation of "where we are" and the values of "what we believe". Goals, strategies and actions will be identified that will take the skills center from the defined current situation to the vision. Setting Strategic Targets to narrow the focus for success with performance measures and key performance indicators (KPI) will be identified and clarified. These performance measures and KPI's must be monitored closely throughout the implementation process to ensure the desired result.

### **Preparation:**

Strategic Planning involves change. When an organization has decided it needs to change, several questions must be answered: "What needs to change?", "Who owns that change?", "Who is responsible to implement the change?" and "Who do we answer to regarding the process of change?" A Steering Committee made up of leaders who are ultimately accountable for the results and responsible for the productivity of the Strategic Planning Team is formed. This Steering Committee is responsible for establishing clear expectations and creating the conditions necessary to mobilize,

execute and align PSSC around strategic priorities. The Strategic Planning Team is a larger group of key stakeholder groups that assumes a significant role in the design, support and success of strategic initiatives that emerge from the planning process.

### **Assessing Performance:**

In order for PSSC to “learn”, that is, turn data into knowledge, confronting reality must become a non-negotiable behavior. Five segments of data need to be studied: the context or environment within which the organization operates, financial or profit, customer or clients, internal business process, learning and growth. Data is defined as any quantitative or qualitative information that is used in a problem identification process to gain insight. Part of this process was to benchmark Francis Tuttle and pay particular attention to those key areas. The Francis Tuttle experience helped us form the Strategic Conversations questions that needed to be further explored. These questions are being used with groups of stakeholders, including the boards and administration of the sending schools.

### **Creating Mission, Vision and Values:**

The mission, vision and values of the Puget Sound Skills Center work together to influence its culture. Without them people may act through a sense of compliance, not a sense of commitment. The mission is the reason the organization exists and clarifies its purpose. It provides the foundation and should be used in daily decisions by asking “Is this within the mission?” The Vision is about what the organization wants and provides focus. The vision sets a clear direction and mobilizes alignment of the different facets within the organization. It ensures that work in the different departments are aligned and working in a complementary fashion toward meeting those things outlined by the vision. Core values are the fundamental, ethical, moral and professional beliefs that set expectations for the conduct of employees that guide organizational decisions. Core values are a reflection of the culture and character of the Puget Sound Skills Center.

### **Goals and Strategies:**

As the vision, mission and core values influence the culture of PSSC, the goals, strategies and actions outline the path, the steps and the tactics to achieve maximum organizational success. They represent the roadmap to reach desired performance. Goals are designed to fill in the gaps between the current situation (where the organization is today) and the vision (where we want to be in the future). The strategy describes how the organization will reach its goal and deploy major resources to accomplish its vision and maximize key performance indicators. Strategies are the leverage points that are believed to will have the greatest impact on the areas requiring change.

### **Key Performance Indicators and Measures:**

Measuring performance lies at the heart of improving. Defining clear results, with specified ways of measuring them, is an essential element of accountability within the organization. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are the ‘vital signs’ that are critical to monitor progress toward the vision and organizational performance, while measures are the instruments used to assess and track the KPI's.

### **Actions:**

Planning is not a substitute for doing. Actions are the tactics or steps required to reach the strategy. They represent the specific terms that are necessary to accomplish to achieve the strategy. Action planning required clarifying who does what by when. It actualizes the strategy that is believed to help accomplish the identified goals.