



SOUTH
SUBURBAN
COLLEGE

2025-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN

This is Success.

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT STOKES

Throughout its 98-year journey, South Suburban College has continuously grown, adapted, and evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of its students, local employers, and the broader community. While we take pride in the College's many accomplishments over the decades, I believe its most meaningful achievements still lie ahead particularly as we approach the 100th anniversary of the institution, coupled with the construction of the highly anticipated state-of-the-art Allied Health & Nursing Center. It is for these reasons and many others that it is critical that the development of the college's strategic plan is a process we use to prioritize efforts, effectively allocate resources, align shareholders and employees on the institution's goals, and ensure those goals are backed by data and sound reasoning.



Today, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in the College's history. SSC remains a vital source of high-quality education, workforce training, and essential services—supporting both our students and the communities we serve. Our strong and growing partnerships with other educational institutions, industry, business, and civic organizations continue to enrich our impact and extend our reach. We are fortunate to have the guidance and backing of dedicated community leaders who share in shaping our programs and preparing a skilled regional workforce.

With the steadfast leadership of our Board of Trustees, SSC has renewed and deepened its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our mission would be incomplete without a clear and constant focus on justice, access, and opportunity for all learners. By listening to one another and embracing both our common ground and our differences, we become more thoughtful, more inclusive, and ultimately a stronger institution. At SSC, we are committed to continual improvement. We have a long-term vision that requires us to look at what we've done well and do it better; to look at our challenges and create opportunities. For that, we are excited about what lies ahead. In the words of Venus Williams, "Set realistic goals, keep re-evaluating, and be consistent."

The 2025–2030 Strategic Plan provides the roadmap that will guide us through the challenges ahead while identifying new opportunities for growth, innovation, and institutional advancement. To succeed, we must enhance our capabilities while remaining rooted in our mission. The goals and outcomes outlined in this plan establish a clear direction for fulfilling our mission and upholding our core values. These values are the driving force behind everything we do, and they are essential to achieving the five strategic priorities that anchor this plan.

Our strategic focus includes five key areas: Students and Residents, Community Engagement, Resource Development (human, financial, and physical), Innovation, and the Promotion of a Performance-Based Culture—all aimed at advancing our mission.

This new plan is more than a document—it's our collective blueprint for building a stronger future and ensuring student success. Thank you for your continued support of South Suburban College and our mission to serve students and the community through lifelong learning.

Dr. Lynette D. Stokes
President

PART I. COLLEGE MISSION, VISION, CORE VALUES, PRIORITY DIRECTIONS & INSTITUTIONAL GOALS

Our Mission

The mission of South Suburban College is to Serve our Students and the Community through lifelong learning.

Our Vision

South Suburban College is a welcoming, attractive, efficient, safe, transparent, and financially secure institution that fosters creative communication and synergy within the campus community and between that community and its partners.

Through innovative teaching, integration of technology, modeling sustainable practices that value the environment, cultivation of external partnerships and a culture of assessment, SSC will play a pivotal role in transforming the lives of its diverse student population.

Our Dedication

South Suburban College is dedicated to:

- High quality education, training, and services for all individuals who have the ability to benefit from our programs.
- Providing accessible and affordable programs to a diverse community of learners
- Training is delivered in collaboration with local businesses.
- A community of staff, faculty, administrators, and students that create an environment and resources for learning.
- Up-to-date facilities and technology that help prepare students to baccalaureate programs or the job market



Our Institutional Goals

Deliver high-quality, affordable, and accessible associate degree and transferable credit programs that support academically prepared students in achieving success at four-year colleges and universities. The College remains committed to evaluating and ensuring the quality and effectiveness of academic instruction through continuous assessment of student learning outcomes.

- To support our mission, it is our primary, non-academic goal to maintain sound fiscal management and institutional accountability by enhancing operational efficiency, maximizing resource utilization, and ensuring financial sustainability.

With these lofty non-negotiable mission-critical goals in place, we can ensure the following:

- Offer career-focused associate degrees, certificates, and industry-aligned coursework that equip students with the specialized skills required for employment in today's evolving economy. These programs are designed to be inclusive, affordable, and responsive to regional workforce needs.
- Provide foundational education in reading, writing, and mathematics for students who require additional preparation to succeed in college-level coursework or complete high school equivalency credentials. Expand adult education initiatives to meet the needs of non-traditional learners.
- Strengthen student completion and success rates across diverse populations by expanding access to academic advising, tutoring, wraparound support services, and specialized learning assistance tailored to individual learning needs.
- Collaborate with regional employers and industry partners to promote economic growth and workforce competitiveness. The College will offer training in essential workplace and digital competencies, support business innovation, and design responsive training programs aligned with labor market demands.
- Integrate real-world learning opportunities into academic programs through internships, apprenticeships, cooperative education, and applied learning experiences that reinforce classroom instruction and build employability skills.
- Promote holistic student development through campus life programs and co-curricular opportunities that foster leadership, civic responsibility, ethical decision-making, and global cultural awareness. These experiences are designed to enrich the student journey and build skills for life beyond the classroom.
- Partner with K–12 school districts to expand early college and dual credit opportunities, support teacher development, and foster college readiness for elementary and secondary school students.
- Continuously improve educational quality through robust internal review processes, including advisory board feedback, accreditation self-studies, and assessment of program outcomes to align with institutional standards and stakeholder expectations.

Our Core Values

Service

We serve our students, partners, and the community.

Student- Centered Environment

We are dedicated to student achievement and promote innovative strategies and initiatives to maximize our students' opportunity for success.

Community

We value our partners in business, industry, government, school districts, and fellow educators.

Collaboration

We value collaboration among SSC employees and SSC constituents.

Accessibility

We offer accessible, affordable programs to a diverse community of learners.

Respect

We admire differences and treat others with civility. We respect the rights, differences, and dignity of others.

Excellence

We support excellence in teaching, learning, and all supportive services.

Sustainability

We will be recognized for our commitment to sustainability, education and training, and the implementation of green initiatives and practices.

PART II. HISTORY OF THE COLLEGE

South Suburban College, a public, two-year college, was founded in 1927 as Thornton Junior College, an extension of Thornton Township High School in Harvey, Illinois, which provided space for the college. On September 19, 1927, Thornton Junior College, under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education of Cook County High School District 205, began classes for forty-seven students with a faculty of fifteen.

Although Thornton Junior College was the fifth junior college established in Illinois, there was at the time no legal sanction for such an institution. In 1931, legislation established the legality of the junior college in the public school system. In 1937, additional legislation validated existing junior colleges outside of Chicago and permitted the founding of others. With the passage of the Illinois Public Community College Act in 1965, college district 510 was established to include Thornton Township High Schools District 205 (presently Thornton, Thornridge, & Thornwood), Thornton Fractional High Schools District 215 (presently Thornton Fractional South & Thornton Fractional North), and Bremen Community High Schools District 228 (Bremen, Tinley Park, Hillcrest, & Oak Forest). District 510 has twenty communities in the south suburban area of Chicago.

In 1969, the name of the institution was changed to Thornton Community College, to reflect more accurately its mission as a comprehensive community college and to dispel the notion that the college was merely an extension of the local high schools. With plans to construct a permanent campus, the college moved in 1971 to an interim campus in South Holland, and the first phase of the main campus was completed in 1972. By 1976, with the exception of a few classes held at local high schools, Thornton Community College offered programs and courses at its new 437,596 square-foot campus facility.

In June of 1988, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to change the name of the institution to South Suburban College. The trustees concluded that since the college serves more than just Thornton Township (Bremen and parts of Bloom and Calumet Townships as well), a broader name was appropriate; thus, the name South Suburban College of Cook County was chosen. For day-to-day purposes, the name South Suburban College is used.

In 1992, the Trustees opened the University and College Center in Oak Forest, to serve the district's western portion. Recently, the college renamed the facility as the Oak Forest Center (OFC) highlighting the facility's close proximity for students residing in the western portion of the district.



PART III. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

For the past two years, South Suburban College (SSC) engaged in a comprehensive and collaborative strategic planning process that involved many members of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, community representatives, business and industry partners, and friends of the College. Our primary goal was to articulate a shared vision of SSC's future and to make that vision a reality through the identification of key strategic directions and the identification of key performance measures tied to actionable plans.

The college provided a strategic planning process that was collaborative, inclusive, and transparent. We created opportunities for listening and inclusive engagement. The College held a Breakfast Forum, complete with a discussion panel, to inform the community, as well as gather data through a survey that was shared with the audience that day. Along with this forum survey, four other surveys were deployed: two surveys for employees of SSC, one for students, and one for the general community at large. SSC welcomed and invited participation and input from all faculty, administration, staff, students, alumni, business and industry partners, and community partners in a variety of ways.

With the data and input collected, the College's strategic plan focuses on five major directions: 1. Students and Residents. 2. The Community. 3. Human, Financial, and Physical Resources. 4. A Spirit of Innovation, and 5. Cultivation of a Performance-Based Culture to ensure MISSION success. Progress toward the achievement of these broad institutional strategic directions will be gauged by measurable institutional key performance indicators and will also be linked to the College's budget allocation process.

PART IV. STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee members are listed below:

Dr. Lynette D. Stokes, President

Dr. Tasha S. Williams, Vice President –Academic Services

Patrick Rush, Vice President –Administration

Devon Powell, Vice President-Student & Enrollment Services

Dr. J.D. Chavez, Executive Director of Accreditation & Institutional Effectiveness

Dr. Kellie Martin, Executive Director of PR and Resource Development

John Bollweg, Director of Institutional Research

James Martin, Executive Director-Information Technology

Lisa Miller, Director- Teaching, Learning, and Distance Learning

Dr. Linda Brown-Aldridge, Dean – Nursing

Dr. Anna Helwig, Dean – STEM

Dr. Megan Hughes, Dean – Allied Health

Dr. Matthew Beasland, Dean – Career and Technical Education

Dr. Suha Mohammed, Professor

Vernita Lewis, Child Development Adjunct – Adjunct Faculty Association President

Shannan Smith, Student Specialist-Staff Association Union President

Lizbeth Atenco – Student Trustee

PART V. 2025-2030 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND GOALS

Strategic Priority #1: Mission Integration across the entire College community; Nurture each student, employee, and community resident to succeed.

1.0: South Suburban College nurtures and empowers each student to succeed.

Objectives:

- Improve student success rates.
- Increase enrollment.
- Increase student retention, completion, graduation, and transfer rates.
- Expand and improve support services that promote student well-being, academic persistence, and career readiness.
- Increase student engagement and satisfaction.

Strategic Priority #2: Community Engagement and Partnerships: Living our MISSION with the community.

2.0: South Suburban College will enrich the community and enhance the quality of life for its residents. SSC will strengthen and expand external partnerships as well as raise the visibility of the college and improve the understanding and perceived value of educational opportunities, supporting lifelong learning. SSC will expand opportunities and remove access barriers for our students and residents.

Objectives:

- Develop and implement a strategic marketing and communication plan to promote programs, services, and community engagement opportunities.
- Expand community engagement and visibility at Campus and Community events.
- Grow enrollment and student success in CTE programs.
- Consult with employers and program advising board to align CTE programs with employer needs.
- Strengthen and increase partnerships with K–12, Higher Education, employers, nonprofits, public agencies, and alumni.
- Foster an inclusive, accessible campus climate.

Strategic Priority #3: Invest in MISSION CRITICAL Human, Financial, and Physical Resources

3.0: *South Suburban College will ensure the Human, Financial, and Physical resources necessary to support educational programs and promote continuous Institutional efficiency and sustainability.*

Objectives

- Improve the sustainability, efficiency, and reliability of campus infrastructure and facilities.
- Strengthen employee recruitment, onboarding, and retention.
- Expand the visibility of job opportunities through strategic marketing, partnerships, and digital optimization.
- Enhance campus safety and security.
- Implement a comprehensive IT strategic plan.
- Advance data governance and cybersecurity.

Strategic Priority #4: Fully embrace all possibilities of Innovation with our MISSION Critical Resources.

4.0: *South Suburban College will enrich the community college experience by seeking out and implementing best practices in innovation for the better use of our combined resources.*

Objectives:

- Continue to foster and reward innovation across the college.
- Promote the adoption of innovative teaching and learning strategies that reflect students' diverse needs, lived experiences, and community context.
- Support and showcase creative programs and initiatives—such as robotics, music, and technology—that engage students and strengthen community ties.
- Encourage faculty experimentation and professional development through targeted incentives, recognition programs, and opportunities to explore emerging fields such as AI and app development.

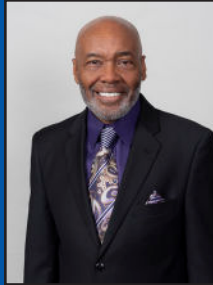
Strategic Priority #5: Foster performance-based culture to inform and ensure continual MISSION Success.

5.0: *South Suburban College will cultivate institutional excellence through continuous improvement (Kaizen) and advance a performance-based culture grounded on data-informed decisions.*

Objectives:

- Conduct ongoing, college-wide assessment of student learning outcomes to support continuous improvement in instruction and curriculum.
- Develop and implement an institutional effectiveness plan that aligns assessment, planning, and resource allocation.
- Evaluate the viability, sustainability, and effectiveness of academic programs, college operations, and community outreach activities to inform strategic decision-making.
- Improve the efficiency, reliability, and transparency of internal processes.
- Expand access to self-service dashboards and institutional research tools that support data-informed planning and evaluation.
- Increase the production and use of analytical reports to guide institutional effectiveness, support accountability, and inform improvement at all levels.

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