A REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF THE FALL 2015

COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN IDAHO STRATEGIC PLANNING

COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY SURVEY

Introduction

As the College of Southern Idaho celebrates its 50th year, it is an opportune time to honor the history of the college while also looking to the future. As the college begins the second half of its first century, it must establish a roadmap for the future that is driven by the college's mission and is both adaptable and sustainable. CSI's current strategic plan was developed through an inclusive process that included community-wide input in 2009. While that plan has served the college well and has been continuously updated since its original creation, the college chose to begin the process of creating a new strategic plan in the summer of 2015. This new plan will chart a course for CSI for the next five years and beyond and the planning process aligns with the college's creation of a new campus master plan and the start of a new seven year accreditation cycle with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The process of creating an adaptable and sustainable strategic plan must value the insights and opinions of the people who have made CSI what it is for the last 50 years; its students, its employees, and the communities that it serves. In order to gather this input, the college conducted a college and community survey during the fall of 2015. A description of that survey along with a summary of the results are included here.

Methodology and Response

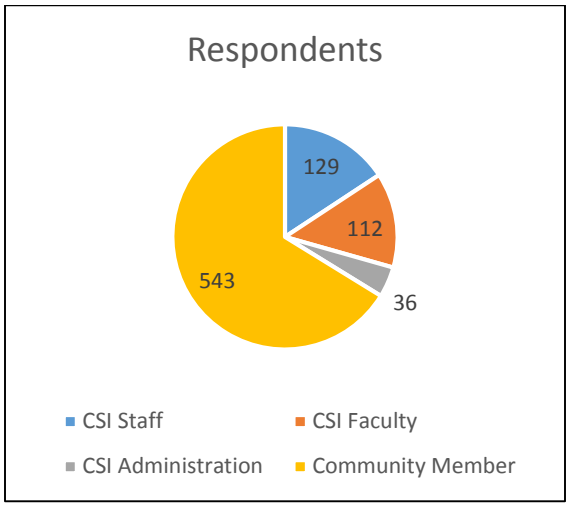
The survey was administered in a manner designed to collect the maximum number of responses possible. No attempt was made to control for a representative sample of respondents and that should be kept in mind as the results are interpreted. College and community members were invited to participate in the survey in three ways:

- An invitation to complete the online survey was distributed by email to all College of Southern Idaho employees and students;
- Email invitations were also distributed to groups affiliated with CSI (e.g. College of Southern Idaho Foundation Board, College of Southern Idaho Athletic Boosters), to business and economic groups throughout Region IV (e.g. various chambers of commerce, Idaho Dairymen's Association) and to administrators from school districts throughout the region;
- Finally, the survey invitation was distributed via a story in the *Times-News* with an accompanying link and via a link on the College of Southern Idaho website.

The survey was open and available from September 21, 2015 through October 12, 2015. During that time span, more than 800 people completed at least some portion of the survey.

Survey Results

In question #1, respondents were asked to answer, "Which of the following categories best describes your primary connection to the college?"

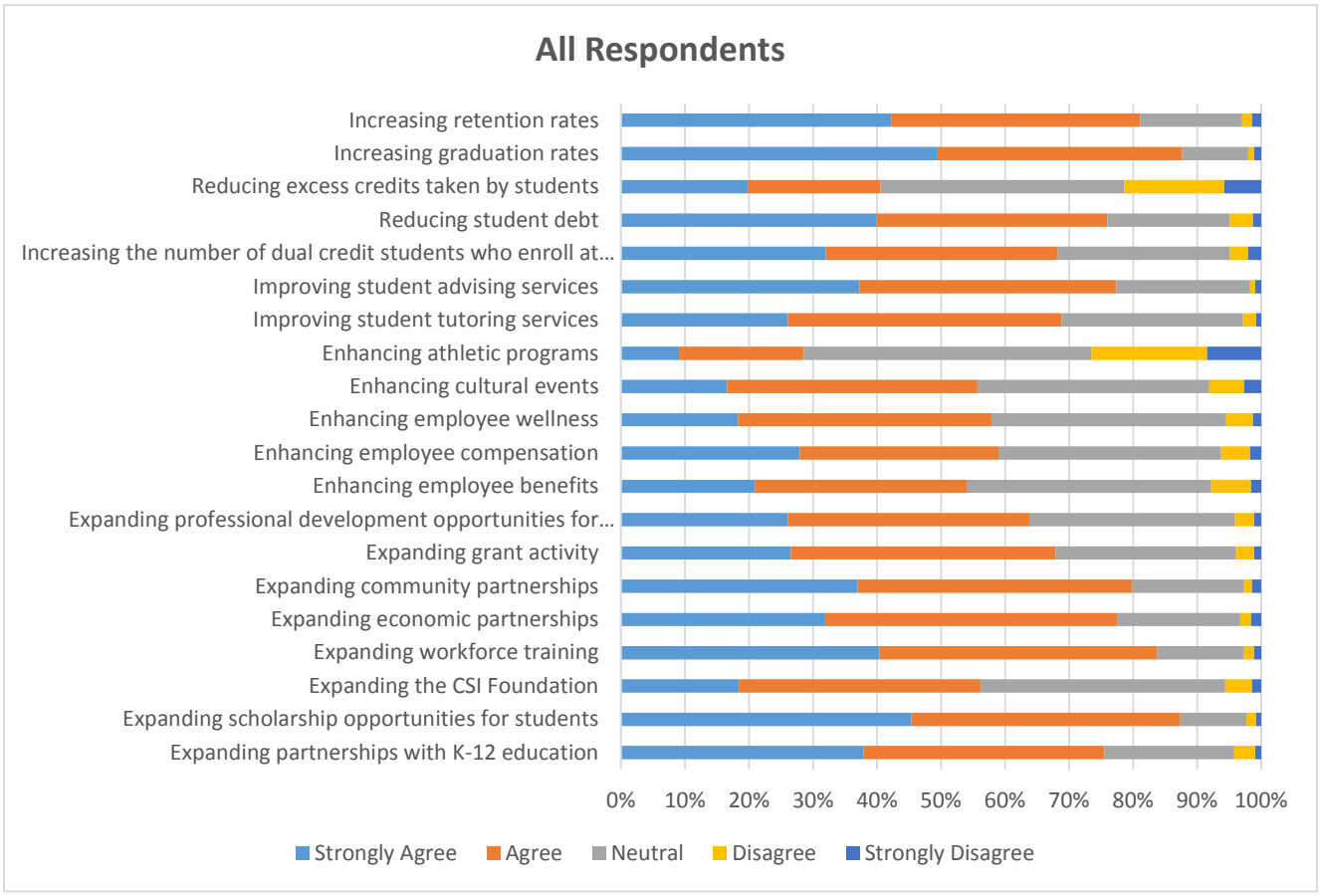


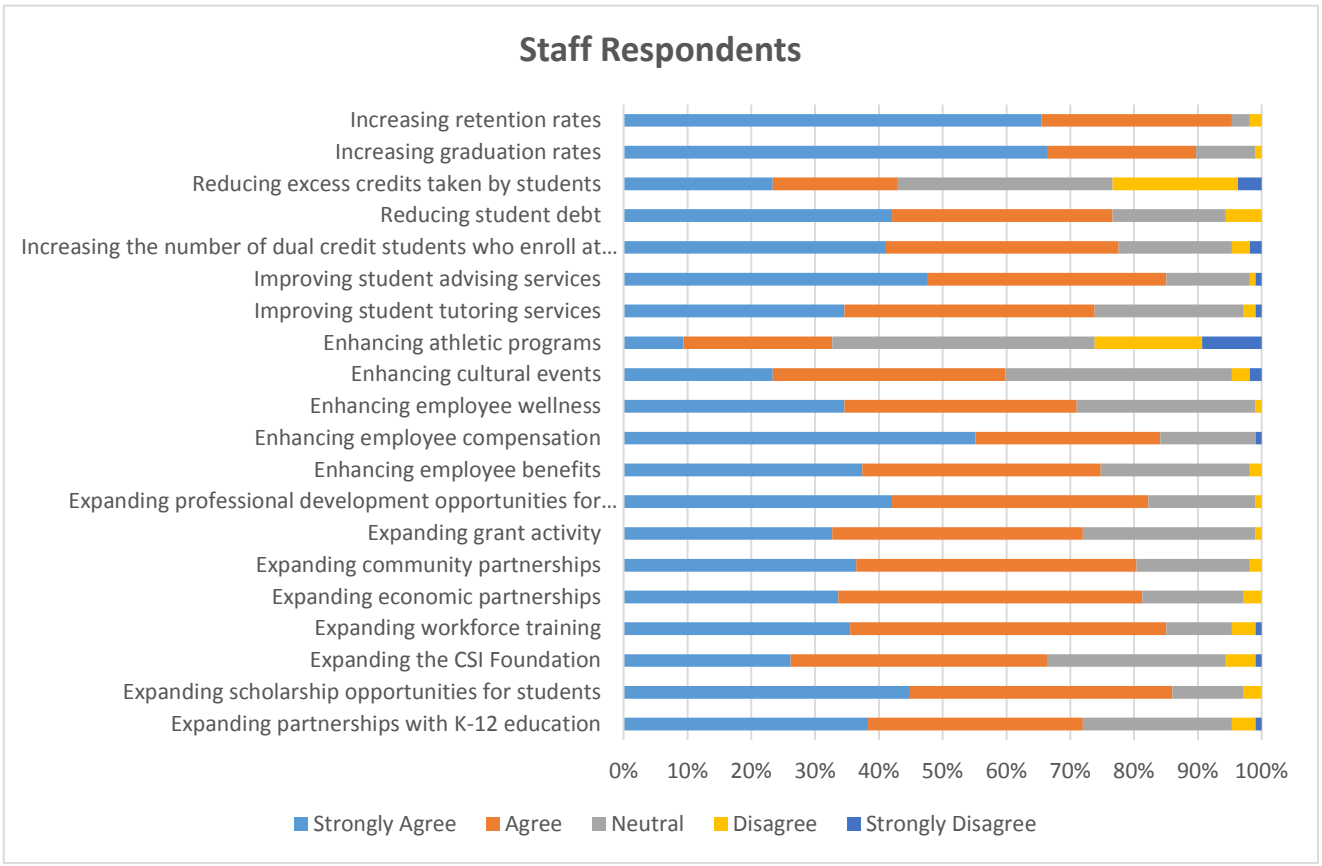
Of the 820 respondents, self-reported connections were categorized as follows:

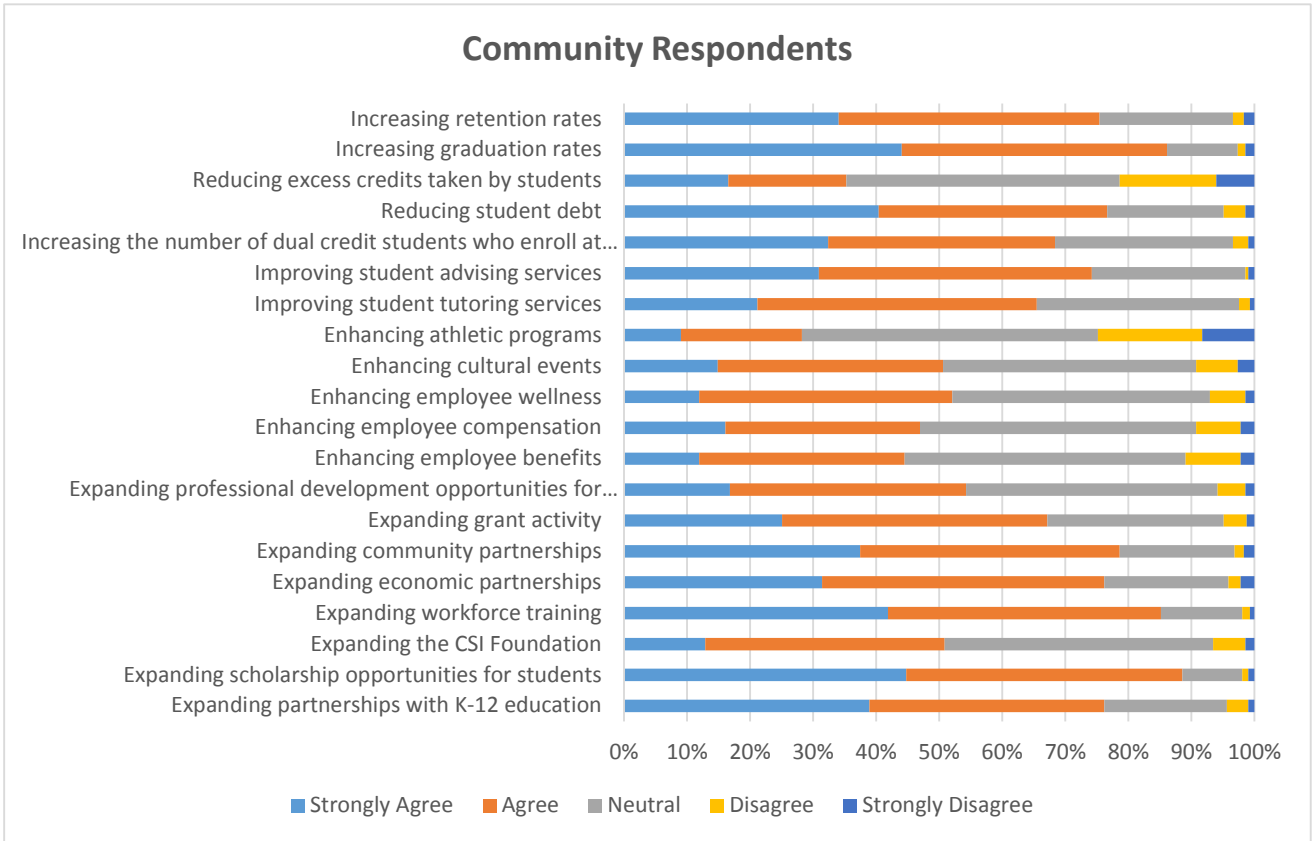
- **Community Member: 543 (66.2%)**
- **CSI Staff: 129 (15.7%)**
- **CSI Faculty: 112 (13.7%)**
- **CSI Administration: 36 (4.4%)**

The distribution method resulted in community input being weighted heavily. However, CSI staff, faculty, and administration are more heavily represented on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, ensuring that these groups have significant input into the final plan.

In question #2, respondents were asked to rank order 20 items in order of importance for the college to focus on over the next five years. Here are the results, for all respondents, and for each subgroup.




Staff Respondents
Increasing retention rates
Increasing graduation rates
Reducing excess credits taken by students
Reducing student debt
Increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll at...
Improving student advising services
Improving student tutoring services
Enhancing athletic programs
Enhancing cultural events
Enhancing employee wellness
Enhancing employee compensation
Enhancing employee benefits
Expanding professional development opportunities for...
Expanding grant activity
Expanding community partnerships
Expanding economic partnerships
Expanding workforce training
Expanding the CSI Foundation
Expanding scholarship opportunities for students
Expanding partnerships with K-12 education
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree


Community Respondents
Increasing retention rates
Increasing graduation rates
Reducing excess credits taken by students
Reducing student debt
Increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll at...
Improving student advising services
Improving student tutoring services
Enhancing athletic programs
Enhancing cultural events
Enhancing employee wellness
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Strongly Agree
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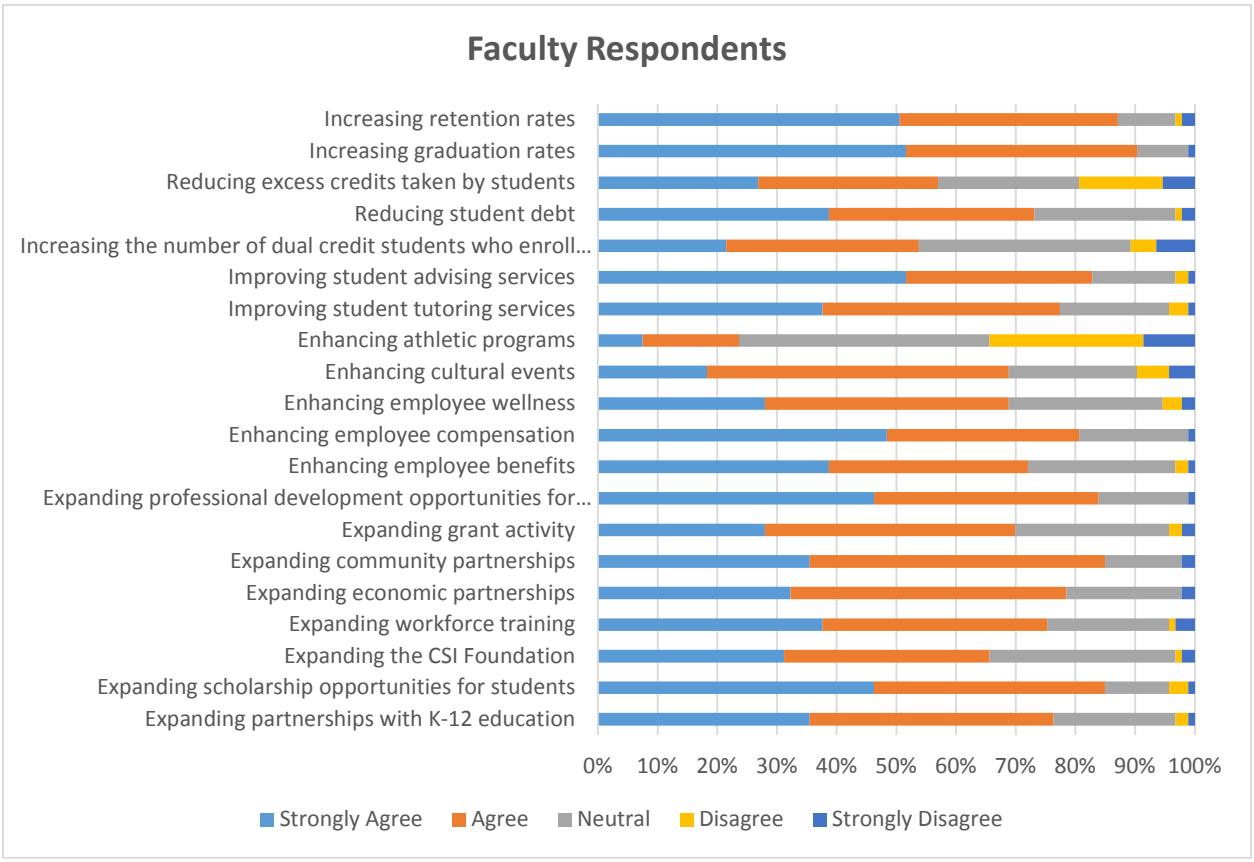
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree


Faculty Respondents
Increasing retention rates
Increasing graduation rates
Reducing excess credits taken by students
Reducing student debt
Increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll...
Improving student advising services
Improving student tutoring services
Enhancing athletic programs
Enhancing cultural events
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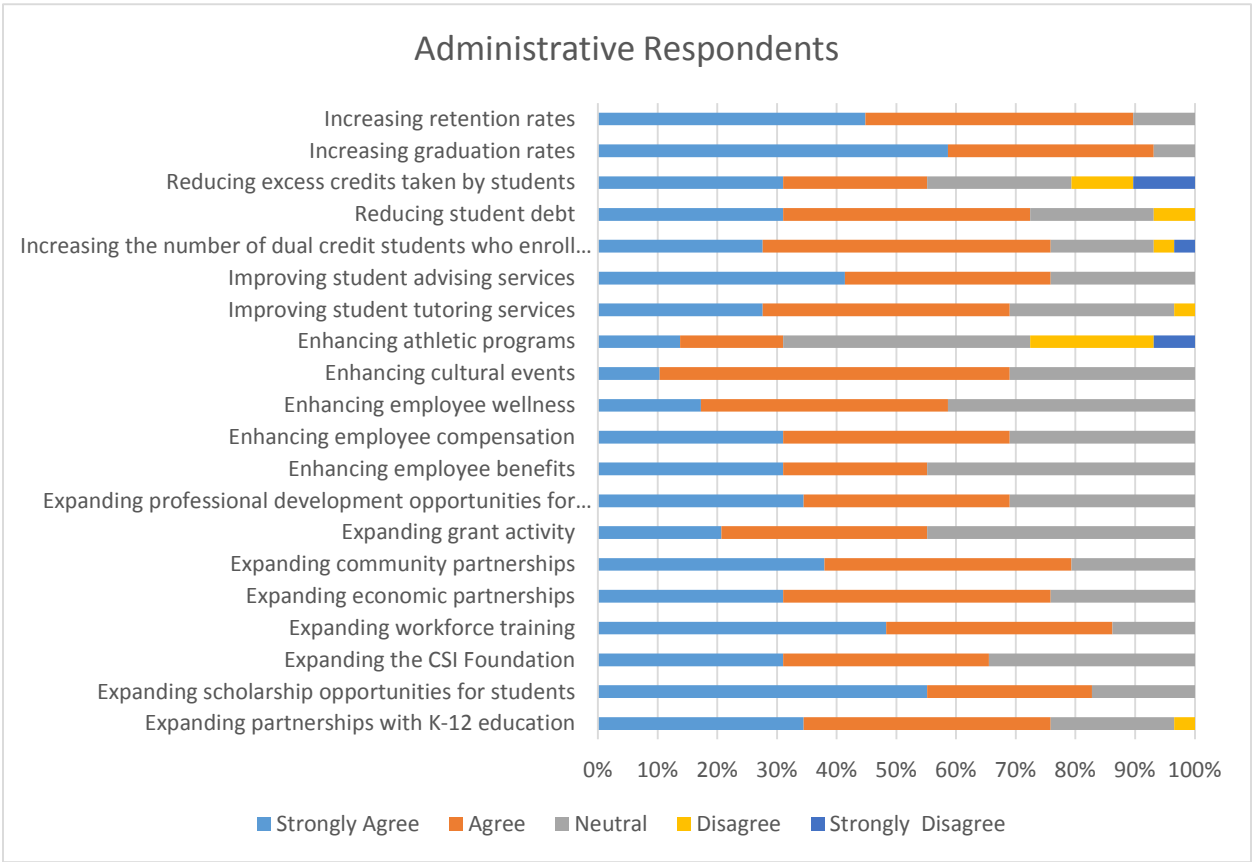
Strongly Disagree


Administrative Respondents
Increasing retention rates
Increasing graduation rates
Reducing excess credits taken by students
Reducing student debt
Increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll...
Improving student advising services
Improving student tutoring services
Enhancing athletic programs
Enhancing cultural events
Enhancing employee wellness
Enhancing employee compensation
Enhancing employee benefits
Expanding professional development opportunities for...
Expanding grant activity
Expanding community partnerships
Expanding economic partnerships
Expanding workforce training
Expanding the CSI Foundation
Expanding scholarship opportunities for students
Expanding partnerships with K-12 education
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

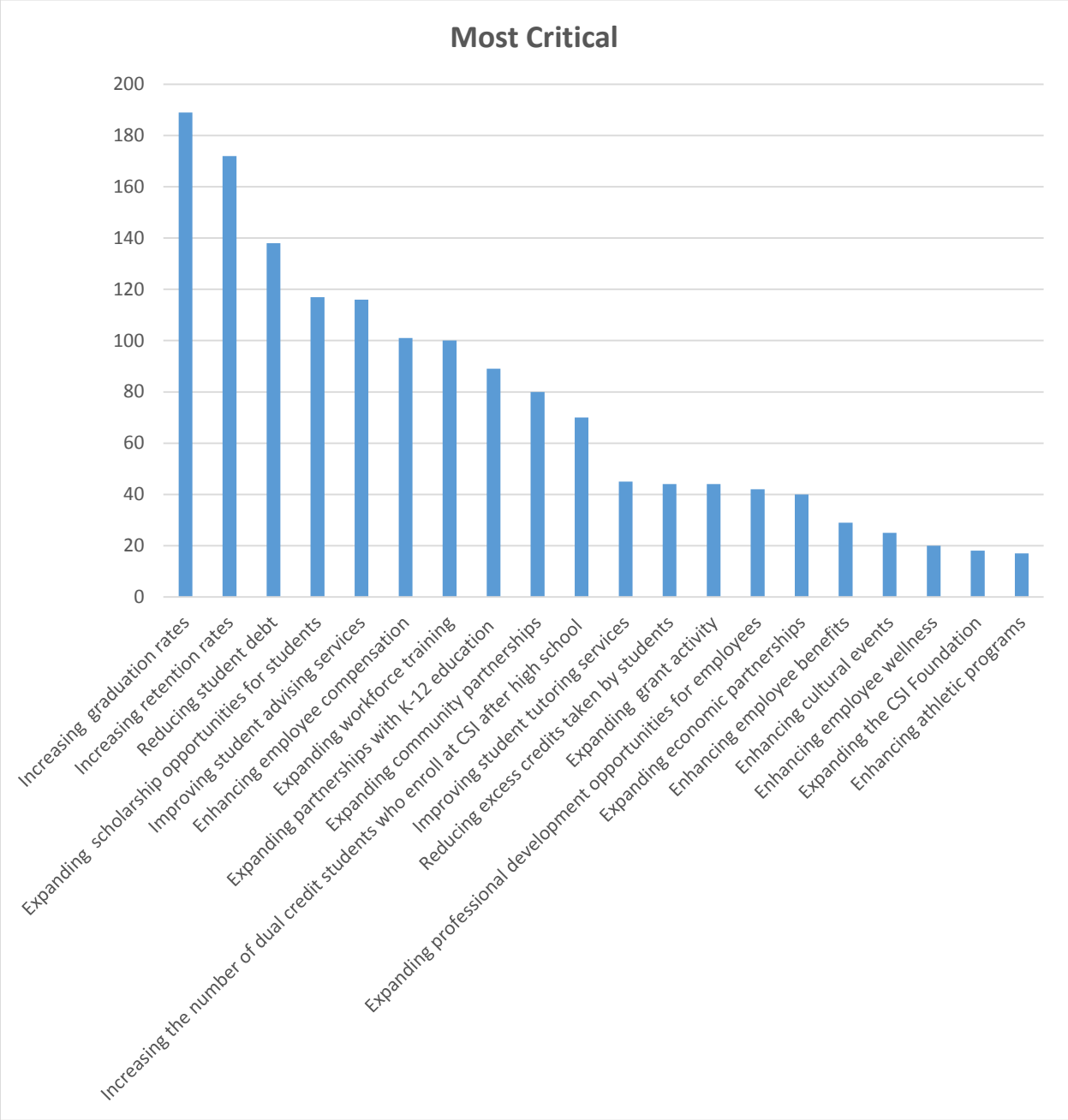
1/28/16

Analysis of Question #2 Data:

When examining data from all respondents, **increasing graduation rates** (87.7%), **expanding scholarship opportunities for students** (87.4%), **expanding workforce training** (83.8%), and **increasing retention rates** (81.1%) were most often selected as the top priorities for the college over the next five years, with more than 80% of respondents selecting agree or strongly agree. The next five priorities, each garnering a selection of agree or strongly agree from more than 70% of respondents were, **expanding community partnerships** (79.9%), **expanding economic partnerships** (77.5**%**), **improving student advising services** (77.4%), **reducing student debt** (76%) and **expanding partnerships with K-12 education** (75.5%). Moreover, more than 70% of respondents in each subcategory (broken out below) also selected agree or strongly agree in each of these nine categories.

Other areas receiving responses of strongly agree and agree from more than 70% of respondents from at least two subcategories of respondents included **increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll at CSI after high school graduation** (77.6% of staff and 75.9% of administration); **improving student tutoring services** (73.8% of staff and 77.4% of faculty); **enhancing employee compensation** (84.1% of staff and 80.6% of faculty); **enhancing employee benefits** (74.8% of staff and 72% of faculty); and **expanding professional development opportunities for employees** (82.2% of staff and 83.9% of faculty). It should also be noted that 69% of administrators marked agree or strongly agree regarding **improving student tutoring services, enhancing employee compensation, and expanding professional development opportunities for employees**, just missing the 70% threshold.

Question #3 asked respondents to rank which three items listed above they felt were the most critical for CSI to address in the next five years.



Analysis of Question #3 Data:

When asked which areas are the most critical for CSI to address in the next five years, respondents chose **increasing graduation rates, increasing retention rates, reducing student debt, expanding scholarship opportunities for students, improving student advising services, enhancing employee compensation, expanding workforce training, expanding partnerships with K-12 education, and expanding community partnerships** as the 10 most critical areas of focus. These selections closely parallel those found in the responses to question #2.

NOTE: Questions 4-10 were open-ended questions, where respondents were asked to share their thoughts regarding general questions about the institution. Because of this question format and the lack of a representative sample of respondents, a statistical summary of responses is not appropriate. Rather, survey results were assessed qualitatively and are presented in a narrative format designed to recognize trends and to group answers into general categories.

Question #4 asked respondents which other items CSI should focus on in the next five year.

Many respondents noted the need for CSI to focus on **quality** in all areas of the institution. Comments includes references to **recruiting and maintaining quality employees**; focusing **on high quality programs and instruction at all levels and via all modalities**; and improving and maintaining the **quality of campus infrastructure, including technology.**

Increasing the four-year degree options available at CSI was also mentioned by several respondents. Some indicated a desire to see more options for completing bachelor's degrees offered by other institution at the CSI campus, while others indicated that CSI should begin offering its own four-year degree programs.

Another theme revolved around **community outreach and involvement.** Comments included a desire to see CSI offer **more enrichment courses and events for the broader community**, and specifically for seniors; **more access to campus facilities** for non-students and for community groups; increased involvement in **workforce training and pre-college education**; and the potential for expanding community ties to the college through **athletics and the arts**. Concerns were also expressed about the need for CSI to **rebuild trust with the community** following recent negative events through **transparency and better communication**; the impact that the **controversy over resettlement of refugees** is having on public perceptions of the college; and the perceived threat that the refugee resettlement program has on **community safety.**

Variety and affordability in instructional offerings were seen as an important focus over the next five years. Specific comments included **increasing flexibility in the times and locations of course offerings**; **focusing on career-technical education** that leads to job placement; and **maintaining low tuition rates** for students.

Question #5 asked respondents to list what they saw as CSI's current strengths.

A significant number of respondents noted that a strength of the college is that it is **centered around and engaged with the communities that it serves**. Specific examples included the college's **off-campus centers** and its **commitment to economic development. Flexibility and responsiveness to meeting community needs** was also a common theme as was the **positive reputation** that the college has throughout the community.

Caring, dedicated, and quality employees were all strengths that were mentioned repeatedly. These qualities were seen as creating an inviting and "family" atmosphere for employees, students, and visiting community members alike.

Affordability and location were frequently cited as strengths of the college. The opportunity for students to stay close to home and get a quality education at a low cost was cited as a strength as was

the opportunity for students get a head start on their post-secondary education through **dual credit course offerings.**

Quality was also a theme of responses to this question. Quality was mentioned in reference to all of the instructional areas of the institution including **transfer programs, professional-technical programs, community education** and **workforce training**. The quality of the **campus buildings and grounds** was also praised as was the quality of **artistic and cultural offerings** and the college's **athletic programs.**

Question #6 asked respondents to list what they saw as CSI's current weaknesses.

Several issues that can be categorize under the broad heading of **communication** were frequently noted. These included concerns about both internal and external communication.

Internal communication issues noted were concerns about communication **between different branches** of the college (e.g. off-campus centers and the main campus); **different departments** within the main campus (e.g. getting different answers to the same question from different areas within the college); not being kept informed of all of the recent **changes on campus** (e.g. unsure of who to contact for needed services); lack of communication regarding **why internal changes were being made or why information was being requested** (e.g. a feeling of doing projects with no clear purpose); and difficulty in **reliably communicating with students**, especially with regard to the college's use of technology (e.g. text messaging, e-mail).

External communication issues were broken into two broad categories. The first expressed concerns about a perceived **lack of marketing for non-credit bearing activities** (e.g. scholarships opportunities, community education offerings, various events on campus). The second group of concerns centered on **perceptions of CSI in the community.** Some indicated a feeling that the college has not been responsive to input from the community and has not allowed for open dialog. Others indicated that CSI has not been forceful enough in telling its story and defending its actions. For example, respondents indicated that CSI is harmed by a perception that community colleges are **of inferior quality** when compared to their four-year counterparts.

Concerns were expressed that the college is **spread too thin** and is trying to focus on too many issues at the same time. Specifically, respondents indicated that the college is trying to implement **too much change too quickly**. Others felt that the college places **too much emphasis on athletics** and **too much emphasis on dual credit course offerings** rather than focusing on a core post-secondary educational mission.

The college's involvement with the **Refugee Center** was mentioned frequently as a weakness. Some respondents felt that the college should not be involved with the Refugee Center at all and saw any involvement as a weakness. Other expressed concerns about the impact that the refugee controversy may be having on the college's public image and on its ability to focus on other parts of its mission.

Cost was noted as a weakness by several respondents. While some expressed a concern about direct costs at CSI, most comments referred to the cost of higher education in general. Several respondents indicated that they felt that low **faculty and staff compensation levels** weaken CSI's ability to attract and retain top employees.

Question #7 asked respondents what opportunities they see on the horizon for CSI in the next five years.

Responses tied to **growth** were frequently mentioned in response to this question. Respondents saw projected population growth in the Magic Valley as a significant opportunity for the college in the upcoming years. This population growth was referred to as a catalyst for growth opportunities in **workforce training, economic development, educational offerings,** and the potential for **more four-year degrees to be offered at CSI** or for CSI to become a **baccalaureate granting institution.** An expansion of **outreach to K-12 partners** was also seen as an opportunity for both growth and an opportunity to focus on quality in **dual credit offerings** and on **student preparation for college.**

An opportunity to **increase community connections** was also mentioned with several examples offered including **focusing on non-traditional college populations** and working to become a **leader in the community.**

Question #8 asked respondents what challenges or threats they see on the horizon for CSI in the next five years.

While responses to this question varied widely, many of the challenges and threats cited by respondents revolved around **funding.** Concerns were expressed about a lack government funding inhibiting the college's efforts to **keep costs down and provide competitive compensation packages.** The financial impacts of **declining enrollment** and **rising student debt** were also mentioned. The challenges of **marketing and competition** in the new educational environment which includes competition from dual credit, online courses, and additional community colleges in the state were also mentioned. Other respondents noted the challenge of **balancing security, safety, and limited funding** when looking at the physical campus environment.

While growth was seen as an opportunity in Question #7, **fast-paced growth** was also seen as a challenge for the institution moving forward.

Concerns were also expressed about the challenge of functioning in what is perceived as an **anti-education political climate** and the potential for the **loss of community support** due to the college's involvement in controversial issues.

Finally, in question #9, respondents were asked if they had any other comments that would help CSI during this planning process.

A significant number of respondents noted that CSI should **stay the course** and **keep up the good work** that it is already doing.

Other topics, most of which had been mentioned elsewhere in the survey and have already been elaborate on in this document included **improving connections with employees and the community**, **staying focused on an educational mission**, **adding four-year programs, increasing transparency, focusing on the quality of all offerings, and addressing concerns about the college's connection with the Refugee Center.**

Conclusion

The information outlined above is being used to help establish priorities in CSI's new strategic plan. The College of Southern Idaho Office of Institutional Effectiveness would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey and encourages you to continue to be involved in this important process. For questions about this survey or the strategic planning process please contact:

Chris Bragg
College of Southern Idaho
Associate Dean of Institutional Effectiveness
208-732-6775
cbragg@csi.edu

Appendix A: Survey Text

The College of Southern Idaho is seeking your input as we develop a new strategic plan for the institution. Your answers to the questions in this survey will help guide the process of establishing strategic priorities at the college from 2016 through 2020 and beyond.

The survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and your answers will be completely anonymous. Survey results will be shared on the CSI website once the survey is complete.

The survey will remain open through Friday, October 9th.

You can access the survey at this link:

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the College of Southern Idaho Office of Institutional Effectiveness at cbragg@csi.edu or 208-732-6775.

Thank you for your participation in this important project!

Survey Questions

Which of the following categories best describes your primary connection to the college?

A. CSI Faculty
B. CSI Staff
C. CSI Administration
D. Community Member

This is the college's existing mission statement:

The College of Southern Idaho provides quality educational, social, cultural, economic, and workforce development opportunities that meet the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

With the college's mission in mind, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Over the next five years, CSI should focus on:

(All measured on the following scale: A. Strongly agree; B. Agree; C. Disagree; D. Strongly disagree)

Increasing retention rates
Increasing graduation rates
Reducing excess credits taken by students
Reducing student debt
Increasing the number of dual credit students who enroll at CSI after high school graduation
Improving student advising services
Improving student tutoring services
Enhancing athletic programs
Enhancing cultural events
Enhancing employee wellness
Enhancing employee compensation
Enhancing employee benefits

1/28/16

Expanding professional development opportunities for employees
Expanding grant activity
Expanding community partnerships
Expanding economic partnerships
Expanding workforce training
Expanding the CSI Foundation
Expanding scholarship opportunities for students
Expanding partnerships with K-12 education

Which three items listed above do you feel are the most critical for CSI to address in the next five years?

Which other items should CSI focus on in the next five years?

What do you see as CSI's current strengths?

What do you see as CSI's current weakness?

What opportunities do you see on the horizon for CSI in the next five years?

What challenges or threats do you see on the horizon for CSI in the next five years?

Do you have any other comments that would help CSI during this planning process?

Thank you for your participation!