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FRAMING NARRATIVE (Context and Assumptions)

In today's global, technology-driven, high-speed economy, computers are becoming increasingly adept at human capabilities. Disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, automated manufacturing, and predictive modeling are eliminating traditional jobs and creating new ones. University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB) graduates must possess creativity, adaptability, and the capacity for continual learning in order to thrive and lead in the "new economy."

In addition to rapidly changing technologies, universities are also challenged by low state funding (SC is among the lowest in the nation), a projected decrease in the number of high school graduates nationally, and growing skepticism about the value of a college degree. Enterprising institutions, non-profits included, are meeting consumer demand with alternative modes of delivery such as open courseware, "just-for-you" delivery, accelerated classes, learning modules, and stackable credentials that challenge traditional higher education models. Institutions that are unwilling or unable to be forward-looking and entrepreneurial in design and delivery risk becoming irrelevant.

As reflected in the USCB Mission statement, the University exists for two groups: its students and the citizens of the Lowcountry of South Carolina. This dual aim defines the fundamental mission of universities historically. Thus, at the core of its mission, the University strives for two things: to graduate a well-prepared student and to enhance the quality of life in its service area. USCB's academic enterprise is equally bound, as it is fundamental to these aims.

In alignment with the USCB Strategic Plan 2023, we, the academic enterprise at USCB, must be intentional about identifying our priorities in the coming years. The Academic Master Plan (AMP) complements the University's vision, mission, and strategic plan and articulates how the academic enterprise proposes to meet the needs of students and the region. The AMP reaffirms the existing USCB priorities of **retention, experiential learning, global learning,** and **Honors education** as the recommendations herein support, directly or implicitly, each of them.

Vision and mission statements ground the AMP and three fundamental "ideals" provide the structure. The ideals are inspired by statements clarifying their purpose—"starting with why"—based on the work of Simon Sinek and his book <u>Start with Why</u>. The University and the academic unit must strive to achieve these ideals in order to ensure relevance and vitality in the coming years.

AMP VISION

We will build responsive, flexible, and integrative academic platforms to develop all students into agile problem-solvers, contributing citizens, and perpetual learners.

AMP MISSION

Academics at the University of South Carolina Beaufort is committed to delivering a dynamic educational experience that prepares students to succeed in a rapidly changing world while improving the quality of life in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

IDEALS

- A Spirit of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Connectivity
- A Diverse Community of Scholars Capable of Learning Anything
- Sustainable Community Models with Global Reach

I. A Spirit of Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Connectivity

Start with why: *In order to prepare students for a rapidly changing high-tech, global job market, the University must be responsive, adaptable, and forward-looking.*

Perhaps the most fundamental objective of the University is to "strengthen and develop academic opportunities to meet the needs of a dynamic and changing world" (USCB Strategic Plan 2023). How the University responds to and anticipates technological advancements will play a significant role in its future.

The success of academics at USCB depends on our creativity, dynamic energy, and adaptability. To create adaptive, well-rounded, creative, lifelong learners who can succeed in a high-tech, global economy, the professoriate must value and model those same characteristics. We must be change-oriented and entrepreneurial at our core, continually addressing the function, relevance, and impact of the educational experience. In short, we must innovate in order to lead in today's global economy.

In order to ensure the development of relevant skills for a changing job market, USCB will continue to prioritize experiential learning opportunities (field experiences, undergraduate research, study abroad, etc.) for all students.

II. A Diverse Community of Scholars Capable of Learning Anything

Start with why: *The University will make a dynamic education accessible to the largest number of people possible, and insists on the belief that all individuals have the capacity for infinite learning.*

Equipped with the understanding that educational attainment is the single greatest determiner of socioeconomic mobility, USCB will strive continually to increase the viability, access, and relevance of higher education in the Lowcountry. As a student-centric university, USCB's will base decisions on what benefits the students, and success will be evaluated by the success of the students. Because of its location in a high growth area in the state, USCB must continually make higher education more accessible to more citizens with diversity goals bolstered with intentionality around inclusion and retention.

Academics must collaborate robustly with student services and other units across campus in order to facilitate an inclusive and proactive approach to student success. Academics must offer diverse modes of delivery to meet the needs of a diverse student demographic, including adult, military, working, and non-traditional students. This may include an array of options such as individualized learning, online learning, evening and weekend classes, executive-style delivery, hybrid classes,

honors education, prior learning assessment (PLA), etc. We must diversify and increase our academic programs in order to accommodate an increasingly diverse job economy. We must capitalize on what our students "bring with them" by helping them realize their intrinsic value and their capacity for unlimited learning. We will recruit a diverse faculty and staff to reflect our increasingly diverse student body.

III. Sustainable Community Models with Global Reach

Start with Why: *The University has an inherent and fundamental responsibility to improve the quality of life in its service areas.*

In response to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) call to be "stewards of place," the academic enterprise is committed to teaching, research, scientific discovery, service, and creative pursuits that enhance the quality of life in our service area. Academics at USCB must leverage creative, interdisciplinary partnerships to solve 21st century problems in our own backyard. To this end, we will promote flexible academic platforms that engender cross-curricular collaboration.

We will measure our success by outcomes in the community—health, economic, educational, environmental, etc. We recognize that innovative approaches to local and regional problems can have global application. Academics at USCB will cultivate an environment of entrepreneurship and creativity in order to spark innovation, invention, and a rich flow of ideas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advance interdisciplinary collaboration
- Embrace Technological Advances
- Prioritize Student Success

Advance interdisciplinary collaboration

USCB must provide the resources for new and creative opportunities in interdisciplinary collaboration within and across the cultures of Science, Humanities, Arts, and the Professions. In a rapidly changing world, a synthesis of ideas are required to develop new ideas and solve complex problems. Moreover, research shows that most graduates will not only have multiple jobs throughout their life, but will work in multiple fields. Business, employment, and innovation are not bound by disciplinary restrictions, nor should the aspirations and ideals of higher education be.

Embrace Technological Advances

USCB will continually revise and update practices to reflect and anticipate technological changes impacting the workforce and economy. A forward-thinking university strives to develop a faculty capable of providing today's students with tomorrow's skill sets. No matter what sector(s) our graduates end up working in, they are all funneled through the sector of higher education; thus the importance of a professoriate that is in touch with industry. Faculty must continually modernize their teaching by learning about information-age technologies and studying their impacts in cross-disciplinary manners. University leaders must provide resources and structures that promote and reward such efforts. Today's world demands that a technological and data-literate professoriate lead the way so that others may follow.

Prioritize Student Success

USCB will continually revise and update practices to empower students' awareness and appreciation for the vastness of human endeavor and diversity and gain sufficient breadth to be effective, creative thinkers as world-citizens. Human activities that cannot be automated will become increasingly valuable. A modern, well-designed curriculum, transcending disciplines and driven by inquiry and exploration, must be infused with those information-age paradigms which span modern civilization. From personal introspection to global awareness, students gain perspective and experience with the symbiosis of modern human-machine coexistence and its associated perils and stand ready to confront the expanse of that which is unknown. Today's universities must support a generation of students who have a desire to make the world a better place.

TACTICS

- Create a Makerspace
- Develop entrepreneurship curricula
- Establish a Lab for Innovative Teaching & Learning (LITL)
- Increase programming and delivery to support non-traditional students
- Reboot General Education
- Re-envision and build academic programs to enhance relevance
- Repurpose the First-Year Reading Experience (FYRE)

Create a Makerspace

It is suggested we are now in the midst of a "Fourth Industrial Revolution" in which technologies are emerging that enable unprecedented integration among and control over the physical, digital, and biological domains. Makerspaces and fabrication labs (a.k.a. "fab-labs"), which often include accessible manufacturing technologies such as 3D printing, are being touted as a key aspect of this latest technological revolution. According to the World Economic Forum, new technologies are enabling a new economic model in which economic growth is decoupled from the constraints associated with limited resources, and we are "well on the way to design and engineer the world around us using the very atoms and molecules it's made of."

Providing high and low-tech resources for students and professors, a makerspace provides an active, hands-on learning environment to spur innovation and creative problem solving through interdisciplinary teamwork. Makerspaces foster an entrepreneurial mindset, allowing innovators to develop prototypes and even launch startups; they can provide a hub for networking with business leaders, entrepreneurs, alumni, and potential funders. In addition to aiding in the development of technological skills and creativity, they also can foster improved communication and resource management skills. If promoted as open, inclusive environments, makerspaces have the potential to increase retention, particularly among females and other underrepresented groups.

Develop entrepreneurship curricula

Entrepreneurship education in universities has an impact on entrepreneurial dynamism and economic development. Students entering today's workforce are faced with unprecedented changes as new technologies continue to transform the very concept of employment. The confluence of technological advances and widespread connectivity give individuals now, more than ever before in history, access to the tools to build, develop, invent, and create. Those with an entrepreneurial mindset will be best equipped to foster change, transcend the status quo, and create value for others.

Establish a Lab for Innovative Teaching & Learning (LITL)

Such a Lab will provide leadership and support for teaching excellence at USCB through workshops, symposia, faculty learning communities, consultation, funding opportunities, and other resources. In particular, the "LITL" will offer training in the latest instructional technologies and pioneering pedagogies to foster lifelong learning among faculty and enhance student learning.

The "LITL" will be a nexus for supporting faculty in building diverse networks and transcending traditional boundaries of academic disciplines.

Increase programming and delivery to support non-traditional students

College students in the U.S. are increasingly non-traditional. USCB must be responsive to serving the needs of degree and non-degree seeking students of different ages and life circumstances, including adult learners, military, and high school students. USCB must invest in non-traditional student support services, removal of financial and institutional barriers, use of alternative platforms and models, and delivery of alternate credentialing that facilitates attainment and meets workforce needs. The need for lifelong learning across a dynamic and evolving workforce means that higher education will increasingly engage in programs and models outside the walls of its traditional structures.

Reboot General Education

General Education is a foundation upon which students begin to realize their personal and professional aspirations. The AMP committee suggests a comprehensive re-examination and realignment of General Education outcomes. The committee recommends four key components for developing our students into agile, lifelong learners that will be prepared for technological change:

- Problem solving: Include assignments that enable both creativity (vision) and innovation (implementation) for considering problems affecting society and community. Includes an entrepreneurship education.

- Data literacy: Include assignments that develop and reinforce skills around the thoughtful collection and interpretation of data as well as the computations needed to transform data into useful information

- Technological literacy: Include assignments that require students to adapt their knowledge and experience to learning new tools and techniques that they have not necessarily used or seen before—even for classes in which technology is already used extensively

- Growth mindset: Include assignments and feedback to reward risk rather than intelligence, so that students can "fail faster," learn from their mistakes, and realize that they have the capacity to grow intellectually

Faculty will need to approach revisions of General Education with a creative, entrepreneurial mindset. If we are expecting our students to think creatively and entrepreneurially, then we as faculty must be able to demonstrate such capacities ourselves. By integrating the above four components throughout the general education curriculum, rather than having them taught in dedicated, discrete courses, students will continually revisit and reinforce these capacities across a multitude of disciplines, enabling them to learn and adapt to new knowledge areas long after they have graduated, thereby creating lifelong learners.

Re-envision and build academic programs to enhance relevance

The traditional university higher education model is in peril. The University must examine the relevance and sustainability of its programs, new and existing. Through purposeful design, initiatives that provide profound educational and employment opportunities for a diverse array of students, in cooperation with community and industry resources, are crucial.

Academic units must ensure the relevance of current and future academic programs and must advertise thusly using evidence and data. Academic leaders must consider the retooling and reshaping of programs to adjust to modern market demands and societal challenges. Faculty are urged to partake in creative discourse on the future of their disciplines; boundaries are permeable. The professoriate has the unique ability to provide impactful opportunities that allow our students to compete in the new economy and to make the world a better place.

Repurpose the First-Year Reading Experience (FYRE)

USCB must repurpose FYRE, collaboratively across the professoriate and staff, as a means of engaging first-year students in a year-long service campaign focused on a single, specific local/regional/global issue. The common reading—whether a book-length text, a short story, or packet of shorter pieces (a single or pair of short stories, together with an article or report, etc.)—will create both a shared reading experience and a foundation for related discussions, programming, and small (or university-wide) projects geared toward activating student engagement in the community to help solve real-world problems. The latter would align with Students Connected.

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