

**A Brief 10-Year History of Strategic Planning and Appreciative Inquiry at  
St. Cloud Technical and Community College**

January 19, 2018

On November 16, 2007, the theme for “All College-Wide Day” was *Many Voices/One Vision: Creating our Future*. The day was facilitated by consultant Cynthia Heelan.

During this session, attendees were introduced to the concept of Appreciative Inquiry. That same day, an Appreciate Inquiry Steering Committee was created, consisting of 25 SCTCC employees, two external members, and one student. Members included Dave Johnson, Dale DeRung, Anita Baugh, Vi Bergquist, Kristina Keller, Deb Holstad, and Jodi Elness.

Cynthia Heelan created a “Conversation Guide” that provided participants with a series of leading questions. After the conclusion of the day, groups from SCTCC continued to work on the Conversation Guide document throughout the remainder of 2007, and for part of 2008.

The result of that work was the “Core of Success Plan for 2007-09”, and it included five components: Students First, Staff Development, Innovation and Creating Opportunity, Collaboration and Communication, and On-Line Technology. The Core of Success Plan for 2007-09 was a plan designed to help meet the college’s planning needs around their accreditation work in Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP).

On October 15, 2009, the day was changed to the “All College Gathering”. This session marked the beginning of formal strategic planning at SCTCC, based somewhat on the Core of Success Plan. The day was again facilitated by Cynthia Heelan.

Participants reviewed the achieved outcomes around the Core of Success Plan for 2007-09, and steps were taken to create a follow-up improvement plan for 2009-11. There was an effort to narrow the focus for this second plan so just three goals were created: 1) One Stop Shop for Student Support; 2) Parking Infrastructure; and 3) Health Services. Work on these three goals continued throughout 2009 and into 2010.

On November 12, 2010 the day was called “College-Wide Quality Day” with a focus on data-driven decision making. In the morning, SCTCC staff heard and had a panel discussion with a group of staff and administrators from the Rochester Community & Technical College. The purpose of the session was to learn to use data more effectively to drive performance improvement.

In the afternoon, there were a number of breakout sessions offered including CCSSE Data, Facilities, AQIP Feedback, and Foundations of Excellence. In each session, participants identified five goals around defining and measuring student and institutional progress.

On October 5, 2011, the name was changed to “All Conversation Day”. Todd Harmening, from the systems office, facilitated part of the day. The morning included a session around aligning the MnSCU system framework to that of SCTCC.

President Helen's facilitated session around SCTCC's Common Themes. The themes were presented as having evolved the college's earlier Appreciative Inquiry work, as well as Core of Progress work. She later presented SCTCC's Five Priorities:

- Student Success
- Community Building
- Skilled Workforce Development
- Sustainability
- Employee Engagement

During the interim from 2011-2013, consultant Paul Gazelle was hired to help the college develop a set of "pillars" from these Five Priorities, along with the key measures. A number of faculty, staff, and administrators were involved with this work.

The pillars were first presented on February 8, 2013, at "All College Conversation Day". They were (are) nearly identical to the Five Priorities from 2011, with some key messages, strategies, and measurable defined. The theme for the day was *Student Success*, and discussion and activities were tied to the first pillar. Student Success was identified as the college's top priority.

On February 7, 2014 the theme for "All College Day" was *Strengthening the Granite City*. Sessions were around helping students persist and finish their education. The college's role was to build supports that helped to improve student retention. The college had also developed a *Student Intensive Care Protocol* that was shared with staff.

On February 6, 2015, the theme for the "All College Conversation Day" was *Who We Are and Who We Serve*. Tom Thibodeau was the day's facilitator. The day started with a celebration of SCTCC's Best Practices. Next staff used Appreciative Inquiry to guide planning in the college's focus areas. Planning utilized best practices in helping to move the mission forward, and in building organizational effectiveness. Tom finished with a presentation entitled "The Power of Why" which focused on moving best ideas into action. Intentional work on the pillars did not appear to be a part of the day's activities.

On February 26, 2016, the themes for "All College Day" was *Imagine Our Future*. The day was facilitated by consultant Luke Green. Sessions included Exponential Impact: The Role of the Technical and Community College, Charting the Future, SCTCC Expo: the Past, the Present, and the Future, and Addressing Students Needs of the Future. Intentional work on the pillars did not appear to be a part of the day's activities.

On February 10, 2017, the theme for "All College Conversation Day" was *I am SCTCC*. The day served as a celebration of the "Many Voices-One Vision" work from 10 years prior. Cynthia Heelan returned to facilitate.

One of the sessions was around development of the pillars; it was from this session that the sixth pillar, Equity and Inclusion, emerged. There was additional time allocated to practice Appreciative Inquiry, review the college's finances, and a brief SWOT analysis activity. Intentional work on the pillars did not appear to be a part of the day's activities.