**Sul Ross State University's Strategic Direction is driven by our Mission and Vision for the future.**

**Sul Ross Mission:**

- To enable optimal teaching and learning through quality faculty and staff, exceptional facilities, technology, and instructional resources, and effective student-support services;
- To support research which advances knowledge, enriches teaching, encourages professional development, and utilizes the distinctive environment of the Big Bend and Middle Rio Grande areas of Texas; and
- To serve as a resource for the enrichment of the cultural, intellectual, social, and economic lives of citizens of the region.

**Sul Ross Vision:**

> To distinguish Sul Ross State University nationally through the success and contributions of our graduates, the scholarship of our faculty, and the innovation and quality of our instruction and our learning facilities.

**Our Mission and Vision guide this strategic direction.**  These principles, combined with our understanding of the current market forces and challenges facing higher education and Sul Ross State University, drive the priorities set forth in this document.

## Starting Point:  An Introduction to Sul Ross

Called "possibly the most underrated little university west of the Mississippi" by former television news anchor Dan Rather, Sul Ross State University has served as the leading educational and cultural center for the Big Bend region for over 90 years.

Located primarily in Alpine, Texas, Sul Ross State University is the main institution of higher education in a vast, nineteen-county region that includes two-thirds of the Texas-Mexico border.  Additional upper-level campuses located in Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde make up the University's Rio Grande College.

Since 1995, Sul Ross has consistently merited "Publisher's Pick" status in *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, and the University ranks as one of the top 100 Hispanic Serving Institutions in the country.  Sul Ross is also recognized as one of the top undergraduate institutions producing future Hispanic doctorates in the physical sciences.

More recently Sul Ross State University was acknowledged as one of the most affordable institutions of higher education in the United States. A January 14 (2014) article in U.S. News and World Report listed Sul Ross as the fourth lowest-priced institution of higher education in the U.S.A. in terms of in-state tuition and fees. Since no other college or university in Texas made the top 10 list, Sul Ross not only ranks fourth in the nation in this category but also first in the state.

Sul Ross is the only public university between San Antonio and El Paso on IH-10. It offers <u>six certificate and associate degrees,41 bachelor's and 27 master's degree programs</u> in fields ranging from education, business, and criminal justice to geology, animal science, and natural resource management.  The majority of Sul Ross faculty hold terminal degrees, and unlike nearly all larger, public institutions in the state, the vast majority of freshman and sophomore classes are taught by tenured and tenure-track professors (as are our junior, senior, and graduate courses).

Small classes with a high student-to-teacher ratio (approximately 17 to 1) and an emphasis on hands-on and field-based learning are the hallmarks of an education at Sul Ross State University.  The University's laboratory facilities and location provide students with a chance to study and conduct research in some of the most ecologically diverse and culturally rich regions in the world.

**<u>Strategic Planning:  Addressing Challenges and Creating Opportunities</u>**

Like other U.S. colleges and universities, Sul Ross faces the challenges of uncertain funding, increased public scrutiny of higher education, and student enrollment.  Related challenges for Sul Ross also involve its ability to thrive as a small, public institution within the State of Texas and to successfully serve a college student body that is largely first-generation, low-income, and Hispanic.

In response to the changing environment for higher education in general and for Sul Ross in particular, the initiation of the strategic planning process for the University began in January 2013.  A discussion of the factors requiring the attention of Sul Ross State University is included here.

*1.     Revenue adequacy*
Over the last decade, state government appropriations to public colleges and universities declined in nearly every state. Cuts in higher-education appropriations accelerated in 2009, as states grappled with the nation's fiscal crisis (*Inside Higher Ed,* April 12, 2010).

Since 2007, Sul Ross State University has experienced revenue losses in the millions of dollars, necessitating reductions in staff and faculty positions and in overall operating budgets. Revenue losses resulted from unprecedented cuts in state funding of higher education, as well as reductions in tuition revenues due to declining enrollments.  With gains in the economy, state funding of colleges and

universities should improve in the short term, but the overall trend of eroding state support is not expected to be reversed.

Tuition revenues, combined with state support, may continue to fall short of actual *per student* cost at Sul Ross, despite projected increases in enrollment.  The University has limited authority to raise tuition, and over three-fourths of Sul Ross students receive financial aid.  Neither balancing shortfalls with tuition increases nor continuing to cut personnel and operations is a sustainable strategy.

New revenue sources will be required to effectively reduce the gap between the University's income and expenses. Additionally, with federal and state financial-aid programs in perpetual jeopardy, the University's capacity to grow its scholarship endowments is becoming increasingly important.

## 2.   *Market Environment of Higher Education*

In August 2012, Bloomberg L.P. reported that over the past 30 years college tuition and fees have increased by 1,120 percent and "four times faster than the increase in the consumer price index." The dream of attending a traditional university is becoming out of reach for a growing number of students. Escalating costs, combined with an uncertain economy and job prospects, also have many Americans asking if college is still worth the investment.

The market environment of higher education has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Although labor statistics still demonstrate that individuals with college degrees earn more money than their high-school peers, there is considerable demand for universities to ensure that their academic offerings are in alignment with current and projected labor-market opportunities.  With a proliferation of options for students, from for-profit online colleges to free MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), traditional universities must differentiate themselves more than ever.

Sul Ross State University's affordability and emphasis on hands-on learning are high-value propositions for today's college students, but the University must continuously evaluate its academic programs in light of a rapidly changing labor market in order to remain competitive.

### Texas "Low Productivity" Programs

In the fall of 2011, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) executed a new regulation requiring that all public college and university undergraduate programs produce 25 graduates in five years or be eliminated, regardless of size.  All public institutions were forced to cut programs, but smaller colleges and universities felt the impact the most.  With an enrollment of 2000 students, Sul Ross in Alpine was obligated to discontinue 14 percent of its undergraduate degrees, including accounting, veterinary technology, and chemistry.

The legislature has recently shifted authority for managing "low productivity" programs to each university system's Board of Regents —a positive development for Sul Ross and other state schools in Texas. *However, a new proposal to increase the required number of graduates per undergraduate program, from 25 to 40 students in five years, remains under consideration by the Coordinating Board. Although such a development seems highly unlikely to succeed based upon recent actions by the legislature, if the new proposal was implemented, an additional 35 percent of Sul Ross undergraduate degree programs could be eliminated.*

In conjunction with this strategic-planning process and the related goals for academic excellence, Sul Ross will carefully assess programs in jeopardy of being discontinued and examine the modifications and investments necessary to strengthen and sustain them.

### 3. *Enrollment and Retention*

*Declines in College Enrollment*

After years of growth, enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities dropped in 2011, albeit slightly, for the first time in 15 years. Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 national enrollments declined a bit further, by 1.8 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively. Declines are primarily attributed to improvements in the economy, but speculation continues as to whether these dips are the start of a much more significant trend (*Inside Higher Ed,* May 17, 2013).

In Texas, overall enrollments in fall 2012 increased slightly but less than 1 percent, the smallest gain in years. Moreover, four out of ten regions in Texas experienced significant declines in enrollments of 2.3 to 5.5 percent (*THECB,* October 2012).

For several colleges and universities in Texas, the "oil boom" and the related surge of employment opportunities have been identified as factors that have negatively affected new and returning student enrollment. One example is at Midland College, where enrollment declined 8.4 percent in fall 2012. Sul Ross was hit particularly hard, with a 9.9 percent decline in enrollment on the Alpine campus and a 4.5 percent decline in students attending Rio Grande College.

While the current "boom" is significant, enrollments at Sul Ross in Alpine have been slowly declining since 1997. Sul Ross faces the ongoing challenge of attracting students to a remote campus and sparsely populated region, hours away from any urban center. Given that 53 percent of U.S. freshmen opt to attend college within 100 miles of home *(Chronicle of Higher Education,* January 24, 2013), the University's pool of prospective students is considerably reduced by its location.

Declines in enrollment have also been attributed to a lack of strategic enrollment management at Sul Ross, particularly during a time when so many colleges and universities were actively honing this craft.

New investments have been made in this area, including the hiring of Sul Ross's newest Vice President of Enrollment Management in 2012 and the addition of essential staff and infrastructure in 2012-13. Positive results have been rapid, with remarkable increases in 2013-14 admitted students and a 7 percent enrollment increase in the fall of 2013.

*Student Retention and Graduation Rates*

Probably the most serious challenges facing Sul Ross are the low student-retention and graduation rates among students on the Alpine campus. The third-semester retention rate, i.e., the retention of students from freshman to sophomore year, is approximately 51 percent, and the six-year graduation rate is around 25 percent. Nationally, the average third-semester retention rate is 67 percent, and the average six-year graduation rate is 54 percent. However, as Sul Ross is compared to established benchmarks, it is important to note that close to half of the University's freshmen are first-generation college students and that an estimated 40 percent come from low-income families, both of which are key factors that place students at risk for not graduating (Sul Ross Institutional Research and Effectiveness, THECB Accountability Reports).

Socio-economic status continues to endure as a strong, albeit discouraging, predictor of academic performance, with low-income students trailing their peers. Nationally, 89 percent of low-income "first-gens" leave college before earning their degrees, and more than 25 percent leave after freshman year – four times the rate of higher-income, second-generation students (*USA Today,* March 29, 2010)*.*

Larger universities with similar student demographics, such as the University of Texas- Pan American, Texas A&M International, and the University of Texas at El Paso, are above or approaching six-year graduation rates of 40 percent (*THECB,* October, 2012). Like these institutions, Sul Ross is now investing significant resources to improve student retention based on proven practices and its own data trends. Goals, objectives, and initial strategies to improve retention and graduation rates are further outlined in this document.

**Sul Ross State University 2014-2018 Strategic Direction**

**Strategic Goals  2014-2018**

The goals, objectives, and strategies outlined below reflect Sul Ross State University's belief that a successful university strategic plan must be driven by academic endeavors and student success.  To assure success it is imperative that this strategic plan be embraced and supported by the entire university community.  A broad range of strategies will be implemented and regularly assessed to determine progress toward achieving the university's goals.

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*Summary of Goals and Objectives*

**Goal 1: Academic Excellence**

Objective 1:  Support, improve, and recognize excellence in teaching and research.

Objective 2:  Expand distance education.

Objective 3:  Promote programs that capitalize on our strengths and address workforce needs.

Objective 4:  Enhance the use of academic technology for pedagogy and research.

**Goal 2: Strategic Enrollment Management and Retention**

Objective:  Increase enrollment and promote student success.

**Goal 3: Enhanced Brand Identity**

Objective:  Develop and implement a marketing and communications plan aimed at strengthening the University's public image.

**Goal 4: Community Engagement**

Objective 1:  Improve communication with and among the University's external communities.

Objective 2:  Enrich the University and its communities by sharing resources, expertise, and experiences.

**Goal 5: Solid, Diversified, and Sustainable Financial Base**

Objective 1:  Maximize and maintain available operating resources.

Objective 2:  Develop and maintain an infrastructure that enables the University to cultivate, expand, and sustain private financial support.

Objective 3:  Engage the University community in public relations and philanthropic activities.

Objective 4:  Leverage information technology to streamline and automate the University's business functions.

**Goal 1: Academic Excellence**

Objective 1: Support, improve, and recognize excellence in teaching and research

Teaching is a primary focus at Sul Ross, and the University takes pride in our faculty and their strong dedication to instruction. Atypically small class sizes characterize the learning environment at SRSU, thereby promoting familiarity with students and facilitating faculty-student interaction. Currently, the student-to-faculty ratio at Sul Ross is 17:1, which is comparable to classroom sizes at the very best private colleges and universities in the State of Texas and throughout the nation.

In order to support seasoned teachers and develop the instructional skills of newer faculty who have been recently hired, it is incumbent on the University to deliberately focus on methods to strengthen and improve teaching rather than taking for granted the instructional expertise of the faculty as a group.

Many faculty members at the University also excel in their pursuit of research excellence, although the typical Sul Ross faculty workload does not afford substantial non-teaching time for this important endeavor. Such scholarly activity might be encouraged in ways similar to those that will be used to promote teaching excellence.

Objective 2:  Expand distance education

Expanding access and promoting distance education through the use of on-line instruction is a second key objective in the Strategic Plan pertaining to Academic Excellence. While not every program or every faculty member must embrace a distance-education component, those faculty members and programs with a substantial student interest in this format should strongly consider how such an orientation might help meet student needs.  Recent advances in Blackboard technology set the stage for faculty who may wish to consider teaching appropriate courses on-line. The latest version of Blackboard permits faculty in traditional classes to interact with students for the assignment and transfer of completed "homework" that otherwise might encroach upon available class-meeting time. It also permits classes to "meet" even when unexpected events close the campus or should emergency situations that prevent a faculty member from attending class arise on very short notice.

Objective 3:  Promote programs that capitalize on our strengths and address workforce needs

Many of our strongest, most well-established programs naturally take advantage of the uniqueness of the area and the workforce needs of businesses in West Texas. For example, disciplinary strengths in biology, animal science, environmental studies, and geology fit well the unique landscape of the Big Bend Region. Others, like education, criminal justice, nursing, and business, mesh well with workforce needs in the region and more generally outside of West Texas, while still others prepare students for foundational work prior to advanced graduate study. Despite having distinguished itself in several key areas, Sul Ross must continually assess its program offerings and determine preferred areas of growth. Strategic planning is an opportune venue for looking ahead to project where expansion might occur.

In addition to the primary goal of educating students to become life-long learners who will excel at all facets of adulthood and citizenship, another important dimension to higher education is an interest in matching the learning environment with workforce needs.

Growth areas that Sul Ross Alpine may elect to expand in for the future have to be particularly strategic in light of diminishing state support for all academic programs. Two areas that recently have been targeted for success are computer gaming and exotic-animal ranch management. The former attracts considerable student interest, and few educational institutions elsewhere in the U.S. have created programs to meet this demand. The latter is an area that represents a relatively robust constituency in Texas that is highly underserved by other public institutions of higher education in the state. External funding considerations have made possible expansion into both of these areas at Sul Ross. An additional area of growth that is on the horizon is alternative/renewable energy technologies. Sul Ross RGC has recently acquired a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Nursing which promises to offer students opportunities for a much needed degree in the high demand field of nursing.

Meeting this third academic objective will depend upon the extent to which the University will succeed in attracting private funding to more fully develop these and other programmatic areas that have yet to emerge.

Objective 4: Enhance the use of academic technology for pedagogy and research

Assessment of student outcomes is increasingly the focus of both accreditation agencies and funders. As the move toward outcomes-based funding gains momentum in higher education, colleges and universities will rely on student outcomes as opposed to the traditional input measures of enrollment. Technology can be leveraged on two parallel tracks that improve student outcomes. The first track deals with analytics on student performance and automated advising tools. The second track deals with the development and design of creative, measurable, and standardized learning experiences.

Sul Ross can leverage tools such as Blackboard 9 and Taskstream to develop and create measurable online, hybrid, or face-to-face courses that address student outcomes and accountability. For instance,

the retention center in Blackboard can be used by faculty and administrators to track student learning and at the same time prepare for accreditation. Standardization of course and program offerings, especially in the online and hybrid realms, is key to ensuring consistency across all disciplines and for all students. In order to achieve this, there needs to be investment in and the creation of programs for faculty development and faculty support geared to offering faculty the platform to learn, better understand, and better leverage the technological tools available.

**Goal 1: Academic Excellence**

**Objective 1: Support, improve, and recognize excellence in teaching and research**

*Strategies*

A. Excellence in Teaching:

1. Ensure that institutional support and resources are made available to strengthen and improve excellence in teaching.

2. Provide ongoing and diverse professional development opportunities by emphasizing innovations in teaching and utilizing the following:
   a. Online resources, campus-based seminars, and professional conferences;
   b. Faculty learning communities and peer mentoring; and
   c. A Train-the-trainer model and exchange.

3. Provide recognition, incentives, and rewards for excellence and innovation in teaching by
   a. Instituting annual, competitive awards with remunerative benefit and
   b. Continuing university-level recognition with monetary awards and honors.

4. Revise faculty evaluation process by
   a. Evaluating faculty long term, as is done currently in the case of tenure and promotion;
   b. Incorporating electronic input from students;
   c. Utilizing peer review as a professional growth model;
   d. Revising annual evaluations to include greater focus on teaching and research productivity; and
   e. Distributing commensurate rewards, when available, for meritorious achievements in teaching and research.

5. Increase interdisciplinary efforts, course offerings, and programs.

6. Improve utilization of resources between Alpine and RGC for cooperative offerings.

B. Excellence in Research

1. Ensure that institutional support and resources are made available to support faculty presentations of research findings at professional conferences.

2. Regularly host on-campus presentations for faculty interested in new research methods and the available funding for scholarship, sponsored research, and faculty/student collaborations.

3. Improve acknowledgement, dissemination, and publicity of published scholarship and funded research by
   a. Utilizing publications, websites, social networking, and media to publicize SRSU faculty accomplishments, and
   b. Underscoring the value of scholarship across the campus community.

4. Increase cooperative research efforts between and across departments and Alpine and RGC campuses.

5. Incorporate targeted release time within departments and colleges for faculty committed to writing fundable research proposals. (Existing seed money competitions are already in place at the University level).

6. Continue to reward faculty who secure "teaching buyouts" in conjunction with externally funded research projects.

7. Provide recognition, incentives, and rewards for excellence, innovation, and student involvement in research by
   a. Instituting annual, competitive awards with remunerative benefit and
   b. Continuing University-level recognition with monetary awards and honors.

8. Set goals for sponsored research and faculty research appointments.

9. Ensure that the Office of Sponsored Programs maximizes grant and contract opportunities by establishing appropriate goals and providing status updates.

**Objective 2: Expand distance education**

*Strategies*

1. Provide professional-development opportunities to enhance on-line and hybrid instruction by
   a. Facilitating faculty exposure to on-line course development software and technology,
   b. Providing in-person and on-line seminars for faculty interested in initiating new distance education courses and assisting experienced distance-education instructors to improve course delivery,

   c. Organizing peer-to-peer mentoring between instructors who are teaching similar distance-education courses,

   d. Developing learning communities interested in distance education,

   e. Developing online courses for faculty and students to familiarize them with online learning and online tools, and

   f. Creating a program that supports faculty in moving face-to-face courses to an online format.

2. Develop a mechanism for monitoring the quality of on-line instruction in order to ensure that students are meeting learning objectives that, if not identical, closely resemble those of face-to-face courses.

3. Evaluate and establish a continuous quality-assessment program for all online and hybrid courses.

**Objective 3: Promote programs that capitalize on our strengths and address workforce needs**

*Strategies*

1. Invest resources in undergraduate and graduate programs that are in alignment with labor-market opportunities and the strengths and assets of the University and region, e.g., computer gaming and exotic-animal ranch management.

2. Assess programs in jeopardy of being discontinued (according to "low productivity" criteria) and determine the modifications and investments necessary to strengthen and sustain them.

3. Evaluate all programs for their ability to meet relevant workforce needs and determine the modifications and investments necessary to strengthen and sustain them.

4. Set strategic-growth goals for degree programs in accordance with evaluations and available resources.

5. Engage the academic community in fully exploring the returns on and the feasibility and risks of establishing a new, multi-disciplinary program in renewable and alternative energy.

**Objective 4: Enhance the use of academic technology for pedagogy and research**

*Strategies*:

1. Invest resources in faculty development programs that train and support faculty in using technological tools such as Blackboard and Taskstream.

2. Create standard templates for courses offered via Blackboard.

3. Evaluate and set strategies to leverage the retention module in Blackboard.

4. Enhance the existing data analytics platform to better inform and advise students.

5. Develop staff expertise and raise staff levels to better support technological programs used by faculty.

6. Implement and leverage technologies such as Lync and SharePoint to provide collaboration and communication platforms.

**Goal 2: Strategic Enrollment Management and Retention**

**Objective:  Increase enrollment and promote student success**

*Strategies*

A. Undergraduate Student Enrollment

   1. Develop and implement new FY13 – FY18 undergraduate recruitment and enrollment plans as outlined in the Undergraduate Strategic Enrollment Plan.  Use data-informed processes to achieve and manage increased student enrollment.

   2. Fully implement new enrollment communications system, including the development of protocols to engage the spectrum of prospective and newly admitted students.

   3. Support recruitment initiatives for specific academic college, department, and degree/certificate programs that the University has positioned for growth.

   4. Work with college promotion and awareness groups such as AVID, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Success Service to conduct visitation days, campus tours, and recruitment campaigns targeting these groups.

   5. Maximize the impact of federal grant funding to positively impact enrollment by piloting and developing initiatives to accommodate greater participation by Hispanic and/or first generation students.

   6. Increase cooperative recruitment efforts between Alpine and RGC campuses.

B. Undergraduate Student Retention and Graduation

   1. Develop and implement an undergraduate student retention and graduation plan to include retention strategies such as improved advising, mentoring, and the like.

   2. Continue the contract with Noel Levitz-Higher Education consultants, utilizing retention data and analysis conducted by the University to implement best practices for SRSU.

3.  Continue to conduct statistical analyses on our students to predict student success (as defined by retention and graduation rates).

4.  Implement a data analytics platform, driven by data from Banner, to provide business intelligence and trending information for improving student retention and graduation rates.

5.  Support students in achieving academic success by identifying and ameliorating obstacles to advancement and by ensuring that our service structure supports student retention.

6.  Enhance developmental education offerings and approaches, including the addition of a four- to eight-week summer college-readiness program.

7.  Continue the work of the interdisciplinary Student Success Steering Committee.

C.  Academic Advisement

1.  Develop and implement a campus-wide degree planning and advisement strategy with an emphasis on serving undecided students and students non-compliant with Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requirements, such as the requirement for the completion of remedial courses within the first 30 hours, to better ensure student success.

2.  Implement *mandatory* advising for all students and advisement training for faculty and select staff.

3.  Provide comprehensive degree-planning tools and instruction for students and advisors.

4.  Implement training programs for faculty and staff on utilizing and leveraging existing technology tools for improving student advising.

5.  Develop staff expertise to better support the faculty and retention specialists providing advising and degree planning.

D.  International Student Enrollment

Enlist the current Student Success Steering Committee to develop a sub-committee to explore international student enrollment, transfer, and retention and academic support for international students.

E.  Graduate Student Enrollment

Develop and implement a Graduate Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

F.  Scholarship Program

1. Pursue increased funding for talent-based and academic scholarships for qualified undergraduate and graduate students.

2. Invest recruitment and scholarship resources in high-achieving high school students who will also be first-generation college students.

**Goal 3: Enhanced Brand Identity**

**Objective: Develop and implement a marketing and communications plan aimed at strengthening the University's public image.**

*Strategies*

1. Integrate and standardize the brand and image of Sul Ross across the University in a manner that ensures consistency and meets industry best practices.

2. Secure seed funding to expand marketing capacity and outreach.

3. Establish niche market identities based on the University's unique character and strengths, such as
   a. History and traditions (e.g., Rodeo);
   b. Location;
   c. Outdoor recreation;
   d. Laboratory for learning;
   e. Hands-on learning environment;
   f. Small-private-school experience: small classes, responsive faculty;
   g. Opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate leadership; and
   h. Affordability.

4. Market the brand of Sul Ross State University to the University's diverse constituencies (e.g., business and industry, parents and prospective students, donors, government).

5. Market programs targeted for growth, including distance education.

6. Highlight current student experiences and use alumni career profiles to highlight programs' return on investment.

7. Develop and implement a social media and mobile strategy to raise awareness and engage constituencies.

8. Train staff to ensure that they are familiar with all technologies currently owned and operated by Sul Ross and are broadcasting effective communication to customers, donors, and stakeholders.

9. Develop targeted marketing strategies for the multiple communities served by Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College.

**Goal 4: Community Engagement**

**Objective 1: Improve communication with and among the University's external communities**

*Strategies*

1. Develop and implement a schedule of regular communications between University and regional leaders representing
   a. Business communities,
   b. Chambers of Commerce,
   c. Municipal governments,
   d. School districts, and
   e. Media.

2. Prepare and distribute regular news to alumni, friends, and parents of SRSU students, utilizing the following tools:
   a. Monthly electronic news/announcements to alumni;
   b. Quarterly electronic President's reports to alumni, friends, and parents; and
   c. Bi-annual Sul Ross newsletters to alumni and friends.

3. Provide networking opportunities for alumni via Facebook, Linked In, and online directories.

4. Systematically gather and update alumni information in Banner by
   a. Continuously soliciting updates from individual alumni and regularly collecting and exchanging updates with academic departments and
   b. Allocating staff resources to continuously manage and enhance the University's alumni data.

**Objective 2: Enrich the University and its communities through the sharing of resources, expertise and experiences**

*Strategies*

1. Form stronger alliances with local school districts to improve educational outcomes for students.

2. Promote community and alumni use of University facilities and services, e.g., library, gymnasium, museum, and meeting spaces.

3. Encourage community members and alumni to serve as volunteers for SRSU by
   a. Establishing and disseminating guidelines for and information on volunteer opportunities;

b. Including opportunities for community members and alumni to speak with students about their careers and areas of expertise; and

c. Coordinating efforts among alumni affairs, enrollment management, and career services to effectively engage alumni and community members in student recruitment, mentoring, and internship opportunities.

4. Encourage SRSU employees to serve as community volunteers and recognize and formally reward community-member and SRSU-employee volunteerism.

5. Coordinate campus-wide efforts to highlight alumni success, by
    a. Sharing relevant alumni data and information for use by Enrollment Management, Career Services, News and Publications, Development, and other administrative offices and
    b. Regularly collecting and exchanging alumni information with academic departments.

6. Offer quarterly alumni events in Texas by
    a. Targeting regions where the majority of Sul Ross alumni live,
    b. Supporting the establishment and activities of alumni chapters in targeted regions, and
    c. Providing a mix of venues and activities, including family-friendly options, by
        (1) Leveraging local venues and resources for regional events and
        (2) Leveraging existing SRSU and local events to attract alumni back to campus .

7. Involve current students in Alumni Association and activities by
    a. Expanding upon the mission and membership of Lobo Legacy student alumni club,
    b. Introducing the Alumni Association to current students during junior year,
    c. Inviting seniors to alumni events, as appropriate, and
    d. Hosting alumni events for junior and senior students ("Life after Sul Ross…").


## Goal 5: Solid, Diversified, and Sustainable Financial Base

**Objective 1: Maximize and maintain available operating resources**

*Strategies*

1. Continue to effectively manage and monitor all available revenues, including appropriations and student fees.

2. Ensure that long-range planning is executed with adequate lead time to be included in the biennial Legislative Appropriations Request.

3. Ensure that long-range planning is utilized in identifying needs and in developing plans for fee increases.

4.  Maintain an appropriate infrastructure of personnel and facilities which can be sustained by available revenues.

5.  Continue to build operating reserves.

**Objective 2:  Develop and maintain an infrastructure that enables the University to cultivate, expand, and sustain private financial support (from alumni, friends and philanthropic communities).**

*Strategies*

1.  Consolidate, restructure, and expand the Development Office to more closely reflect industry standards.

2.  Coordinate advancement efforts among different campus interests.

3.  Secure private seed funding to start an expanded Development operation and to support it for two years while it becomes self-sufficient.

4.  Restructure the SRSU Foundation and assign a manager and resources to continuously enhance effectiveness by
    a.  Reviewing by-laws and revising them as appropriate,
    b.  Appointing a full Board,
    c.  Ensuring the Board is actively engaged and participating, and
    d.  Instituting a culture of giving by board members.

**Objective 3:  Engage the University community in public relations and philanthropic activities**

*Strategies*

1.  Facilitate campus-wide philanthropic efforts by establishing an SRSU Development Advisory Committee composed of SRSU faculty and staff.

2.  Establish an Advancement Master Calendar to foster collaboration among faculty and staff across programs.

3.  Periodically survey faculty and staff regarding the needs of the University, including colleges and departments, and involve interested faculty and staff in donor development and cultivation.

4.  Establish annual employee campaigns to promote a culture of giving.

**Objective 4:  Leverage Information technology to streamline and automate the University's business processes**

*Strategies*

1. Leverage technology governance and advisory committees to devise innovative ways of filling gaps and/or automating existing business processes.

2. Establish a continuous training program for IT staff to ensure that knowledge and skills are kept up-to-date, industry best practices are followed, and internal personnel are competent to manage and execute tactical and strategic projects (thereby reducing reliance on external vendors and contractors).

3. Implement a data analytics tool to provide informed decision-making via standardized reports and dashboards.

4. Conduct business process reviews in administrative and enrollment offices to identify gaps and to streamline business operations.

5. Develop a continuous improvement program to train all staff on leveraging technology to streamline and automate processes.

6. Improve staff expertise and levels to support technology automations as related to business and academic computing.

7. Execute the prioritized Banner roadmap.

8. Conduct health-checks to identify gaps in business processes and as a means to train staff on enhancements in Banner/ERP system.

9. Implement a project prioritization process to address strategic goals, including the commitment of necessary resources.

10. Implement and leverage technologies such as Lync and SharePoint for effective communications and collaboration across geographical distances.