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Message From the Dean

When, just over a decade ago, I was asked to create a new school with a new purpose by then-Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, I shared his hopes for the CUNY School of Professional Studies: it would be nimble, responsive, and innovative. No one envisioned that it would have an array of undergraduate and graduate degrees, many of them online before any other school in CUNY had an online degree. No one imagined that it would feature world-class scholars in labor relations and urban studies, nor that it would offer the first degrees in the country in applied theatre and disability studies.

The 2012 Strategic Plan outlined still more ambitious plans for the CUNY School of Professional Studies: the acquisition of its own campus, the development of a Foundation, and the creation of a number of new degree programs. These included the School’s first on campus bachelor’s degrees (in human relations and urban and community studies), as well as CUNY’s first online bachelor’s degrees in health information management, information systems, and nursing – that last our fastest growing degree, reflecting the pressing need it is addressing.

With all this accomplished, it was time for a new Strategic Plan, one with the new goals and vision of a School now grown larger than many colleges in the state, one that would continue to meet new challenges while sustaining and enhancing the distinctive programs it already has. This Strategic Plan is the result of a year-long process of meetings with School-wide participation, and especially the hard work of those noted in the list of key contributors.

I am grateful to all who have worked on the Strategic Plan, excited by the strong consensus it produced, and eager to achieve its goals.

John Mogulescu
Dean
Founded in 2003 to be especially responsive to the needs of students in the workplace, the CUNY School of Professional Studies built a portfolio of certificate programs before offering its first degree in 2006, which was also CUNY’s first online degree. It has grown from an initial cohort of 200 students to over 2,500 degree and certificate students. It also serves over 10,000 students in non-credit instruction, many of them in organizations and agencies of the State and City of New York. Part of the CUNY Graduate School and University Center, initially based at 365 5th Avenue, CUNY SPS acquired its own campus at 119 West 31st Street in Fall of 2013.

The CUNY School of Professional Studies currently has 25 certificate programs and 18 degrees: bachelors of arts in communication and media, disability studies, human relations, psychology, sociology, and urban and community studies; bachelors of science in business, health information management, information systems, and nursing; masters of arts in applied theatre, disability studies, labor studies, psychology, and urban studies; and masters of science in business management and leadership, data analytics, and disability services in higher education. All of the undergraduate degrees are online except for urban and community studies and human relations, while the master’s degree programs are split between online and on campus programs. CUNY SPS has awarded over 700 certificates and graduated over 750 baccalaureate and 325 master’s degree students in the School’s short history.

The ability to provide, not just online degrees, but all the online services and support needed for them, has made CUNY SPS the vanguard for online instruction in the University. The ability to provide, not just online degrees, but all the online services and support needed for them, has made CUNY SPS the vanguard for online instruction in the University.

The CUNY School of Professional Studies

The School’s work with city and state agencies, including the training and relocation logistics for New York City during recent super-storms, continues to grow in importance and impact, generating over $45 million in grants since the School’s inception. The recently established CUNY SPS Foundation, now with eleven board members, has already amassed nearly $1 million in philanthropic gifts.

A product of the 21st century, attuned to our time’s accelerated pace, the CUNY School of Professional Studies has shown remarkable success as well as rapid growth, and is now exploring becoming an independent school within the CUNY system, having received approval from the CUNY Board of Trustees in April of 2015. That its metamorphosis is deliberative as well as responsive is clear from its new Strategic Plan.
Mission

The CUNY School of Professional Studies provides online, classroom-based, and customized programs of study that are responsive to the needs of our students and our city, focusing on fields as well as forms of teaching, learning, and scholarship that highlight innovation, personal and social progress, and opportunities for careers and service.
Vision

The CUNY School of Professional Studies, grounded in CUNY’s tradition of access and academic excellence, is dedicated to being the University’s premier school for adult learners. Adapting to the needs of our students across a growing range of fields and sectors, we expand CUNY’s ability to address the demands of evolving workplaces and disciplines. With core values of responsiveness and quality, and as the University’s leader in online learning, we will continue to introduce new opportunities that expand the possibility and promise of public education, and position our students to grow personally, excel in the workplace, and enrich their communities.
Strategic Plan 2015-2020
Core Commitment: Student Success

As an educational institution, the CUNY School of Professional Studies is focused on the success of its students. That success is defined by their engaging with effective instruction and student services in pursuit of their goals, and graduating ready to contribute to their chosen fields. This core commitment to our students undergirds all that follows.
Strategic Direction I: Advancing the Academic Mission

Goals

The CUNY School of Professional Studies is an institution of higher learning, with learning at its center, and its priorities must reflect that.

1. Ensure student success from admission to graduation and beyond

- Provide new student orientation and a structured first year experience for each student, including planning of at least two years of course progress through the degree.
- Review and implement the recommendations of the Retention Task Force, and monitor retention, progress, and completion for each program.
- Implement student enrichment activities, including mentoring and community support within programs and opportunities for experiential and international learning.
- Ensure student input through student representation, surveys, and other opportunities for feedback.

2. Stabilize and strengthen academic programs

- Develop a faculty recruitment plan with particular attention to recruiting full-time faculty proportionate to program needs and proposed growth.
- Promote excellence in teaching through faculty development, improved instructional design, and use of technology.
- Support opportunities for grants and scholarship.
- Explore synergies and collaborations across programs, especially by grouping programs into affiliated clusters sharing faculty and oversight.

3. Affirm the centrality of academic programs’ faculty and leadership in academic decisions

- Review the School’s governance structure and by-laws to ensure shared governance as the School grows and evolves.
- Review communication procedures to ensure those affected by actions or changes are always consulted.
Goals

Our responsiveness to new fields and modes of learning has meant remarkable growth for the CUNY School of Professional Studies; that growth must be sustained in both senses: continued, but also supported, never achieving growth at the cost of quality.

1. Establish CUNY SPS as a leader in online teaching and learning

Expand the number of online programs, with careful market analysis and planned program development.

Create a Center for Online Teaching and Learning as part of an expanded faculty development effort and outreach.

2. Explore and pilot innovative learning pathways

Develop alternative pathways to degree completion including shorter terms, stackable credentials, prior learning assessment, and competency-based learning.

Focus on work-related learning and experiential learning opportunities in service learning projects, capstone courses, and internships, especially with industry and clinical partnerships.

3. Provide all the technological support services that students, faculty, and staff need

Enhance support for students and faculty and expand studio space for the production of videos and web seminars.

Improve both the support and the structure for online course/program development and course life-cycle processes.

4. Increase new enrollment in existing programs

Grow enrollment by improved marketing and strategic recruitment.

Increase enrollment through partnerships with industry and with other campuses, as well as through expanded scholarship opportunities for students.

5. Improve Student Services

Provide personalized student support, reaching out to students about needs that may be unmet.

Expand career services for students, by tracking their career interests and implementing mentoring and early interventions.
Strategic Direction III: Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Assessment is the key to ensuring improvement: not assessment for its own sake, but for identifying where improvement is needed, making recommendations for improvement, ensuring recommendations are implemented, and evaluating results.

Goals

1. Implement School-wide assessment
   - Develop an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP).
   - Develop and review assessment plans and indicators for each program and administrative office.
   - Aggregate and analyze assessment data at the institutional level, creating a website to publish the data and progress.
   - Propose and implement institutional changes on the basis of outcomes reports and data assessment.

2. Implement School-wide budget planning
   - Use annual reports to inform budget planning and make that planning process transparent.
   - Base resource allocation and management on the same reporting and assessment processes.

3. Assess and support compliance with external mandates
   - View all requirements for accessibility, HEOA, and Title IX compliance.
   - Support faculty and staff compliance, with special attention to ADA requirements (ensuring reasonable accommodations and accessibility for students with disabilities).
Strategic Direction IV: Forging a Distinctive Institutional Identity

Goals

The many different programs and units of the CUNY School of Professional Studies should all work in concert, with a sense of the School’s distinctive mission and vision.

1. Build on the School’s strengths to forge a distinctive identity

Maximize the School’s leadership role in online education to position it as the place in CUNY for online courses and faculty development for teaching such courses.

Use the School’s role as an institution for degree completion, to position it as the school of choice for returning adult students and as the center of excellence for adult learning at CUNY.

2. Become an independently registered institution and so increase the School’s opportunities for self-definition

See the School through the necessary approval processes for independent accreditation.

Assume and establish a structure for all administrative functions currently provided by the Graduate Center.

3. Identify brand attributes to strengthen the CUNY SPS brand

Work within the School and the University to build brand attributes and identity features for greater self-definition.

Conduct ongoing marketing analysis to attract attention to and enhance the reputation of CUNY SPS.

4. Take full advantage of the School’s location in New York City

Identify with and contribute to the welfare of the City, State, and culture of New York, developing programs for its professions, organizations, and unions.

Build on the School’s location in the world’s premier global city to enhance national and international reach.

5. Ensure that the institutional identity fosters both community and diversity

Create a Committee on Institutional Equity and Diversity to promote diversity at all levels.

Further connections and collaborations among all programs, units, and partnerships, creating a community that is more than the sum of its parts.
Strategic Direction V: Building Institutional Capacity

Goals

Because goals require the means to achieve them, the CUNY School of Professional Studies must find economies of effort and organization, and increase the School’s sources of support.

1. Increase funding and resources for the School
   - Increase enrollment, programs, and course offerings.
   - Increase revenues from grants and contracts.
   - Recognizing the limits of public funding support, leverage the members of the CUNY SPS Foundation Board of Directors to aggressively build development and philanthropy funding, meeting the goals of the Foundation’s Help Put New York to Work campaign.

2. Manage the School’s resources not just by careful planning but by attention to equity and proportion
   - Create a budget analysis for all degree and certificate programs and major projects.
   - Confer with directors and program heads regarding expectations for contributions to and from programs.
   - Ensure transparency in resource allocation.

3. Establish guidelines for institutional growth and program additions
   - Identify and clarify principles for institutional growth in all areas.
   - Create guidelines for adding new programs, emphasizing viability as well as need and purpose.

4. Heighten engagement with and connection to the School for all stakeholders
   - Offer more engagement opportunities for students, starting with orientation, and continuing with campus-based and online events.
   - Improve alumni engagement through communication, surveys, employment data collection, and campus-based events and online events.
   - Improve faculty and staff relations by instituting more professional development, more community events (health fairs, brown bag lunches, etc.), and other means of connection, all tied to a community calendar.
   - Improve and expand opportunities that leverage the expertise and engage the members of the CUNY SPS Foundation Board of Directors in the academic work and life of the School.
The Strategic Plan is the expression of the School’s aspirations.

Key Contributors to the Strategic Plan

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Recognizing that we only offered a single degree eight years ago, it is remarkable to note that we will confer 505 certificates and degrees this evening. This growth wouldn’t be possible without you.

– Dean John Mogulescu, addressing the Class of 2015.