AQIP Category Nine: Building Collaborative Relationships

PROCESSES (P)

9P1- Creating, Prioritizing and Build Relationships with Educational and Other Organizations

The University of St. Francis continually seeks effective means by which to strengthen relationships with feeder high schools, community colleges and other entities that provide links to its future students.

Since the majority of its traditional-aged on-campus students reside within a 50-mile radius, the university prioritizes the high schools and community colleges within this geographical radius, though it addresses the entire state of Illinois and regions within neighboring states. A geographical focus has been identified for all programs through a geo-demography study that has been confirmed by the Strategic Marketing Communication Task Force appointed by the president. (See Addendum 9-1)

Admission staff and faculty work closely with feeder high schools to provide information about the University of St. Francis as well as to educate potential students about attending college in general. Admission staff members regularly meet with high school guidance counselors and are host to and participate in college fairs for both students and parents. High school guidance counselors are invited as USF guests to a JackHammers baseball game at the beginning of each school year. Admission also participates in the Illinois Association for College Admission Counseling (IACA) which provides many networking opportunities with high school guidance counselors.

Special events and activities such as teacher mentoring and professional development link high school teachers to USF faculty members.

USF athletic coaches have established close personal relationships with their high school and community college counterparts and extend to a wider geographical range. Sport-specific clinics conducted by USF coaches are attended by more than 500 Chicago area high school and other coaches. More than 1,000 Chicago area student athletes attend summer camps offered by USF coaches.

The University’s Health and Wellness Center takes a variety of services, both medical and educational, to area schools as a service to our community’s students. This is an important outreach in fulfilling the university’s mission as well as in connecting with organizations, schools and others which provide USF students. As another example, the USF Recreation, Sport and Tourism Management Department provides outreach programs in after school programming such Camp Fitness and Kids in Nature to elementary District 86 schools through the Joliet Partnership for Healthy Family program (JPHF). This volunteer consortium includes District 86, Harvey Brooks Foundation, Provena Saint Joseph Medical Center, University of St. Francis, Joliet Park District and the University of Illinois Extension Service for the purpose of providing programs to address childhood obesity issues.
Seventeen community colleges are targeted by USF Admission. Articulation agreements are in effect for programs with 10 community colleges and transfer guides are provided for a variety of programs for 17 community colleges (http://www.stfrancis.edu/content/advising/tranguide.htm). Community college faculty members are invited to programs on campus and faculties from both USF and community colleges work together regarding curriculum. A bridge program for nursing between USF and Joliet Junior College has recently been reviewed and revitalized (http://www.stfrancis.edu/academics/college-of-nursing-allied-health/undergraduate-programs/nursing-fast-track-program/).

USF Admission counselors meet regularly with counselors at community colleges, are host to and participate in college fairs and information meetings and conduct on-site student visits and admissions. Community college counselors and faculty members are invited to USF for updates and discussions on curriculum and programming. USF is also a member of Private Illinois Colleges and Universities (PICU) which sponsors a variety of networking and support activities.

USF has dedicated two employees within the Degree-Completion and Graduate Admission Department to instituting partnerships, one to corporate partnerships and the other to school partnerships. Presently, five corporate partnerships, primarily with health care organizations, are in effect with USF noted as a preferred educational provider. Corporate partnerships are sought from throughout the country with organizations with shared philosophies.

The College of Education has agreements with nine school districts to provide master’s degree programs to cohorts. In Illinois, USF has agreements with Plainfield School District 202; Oak Prairie Elementary School in Lockport, Yorkville School District; Crystal Lake School District 47; Oswego School District; Neuqua Valley School District; Lincolnway School District; Shepard High School; Palos School District; and Porta High School in Petersburg. The University of St. Francis has partnered with Performance Learning Systems (PLS) to offer a collaborative Teaching and Learning advanced degree program. (http://www.stfrancis.edu/content/ed/pls.htm) The College of Education’s Joliet Professional Development School Partnership (JPDSP) remains effective. (http://www.stfrancis.edu/content/pds/)

The University is an active member of the Joliet Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Business-Education Council; the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce’s Business-Education Council; and the Will County Center for Economic Development’s Will County Cares Education Council. Through these initiatives, the university maintains close relationship and communication with area school superintendents and businesses that support education.

Professional development programs that do not apply to degrees are offered through the Regional Education Academy for Leadership (REAL) and the USF Business Solutions Center. REAL maintains relationships with many school districts and USF Business Solutions maintains relationships with business and non-profit organizations in the community.

The Degree-Completion and Graduate Admission Department is also a member and participant in Resources for Educating Adults in the Chicagoland area (REACH), which provides a variety of networking opportunities with employers. (http://www.reach-chicago.org/)

Membership and participation in the South Metropolitan Regional Higher Education Consortium (SMRHEC), made up of two- and four-year institutions, provides many opportunities to reach
the organizations that provide our students and well as directly reach students. The group addresses diversity as well as other areas and levels, and includes presidents of the 15 member institutions. (http://www.southmetroed.org/)

Diversity is also addressed through faculty and student outreach to the regional minority communities and through a variety of service projects by students and employees. A partnership with Big Brothers/Sisters is an example of one that meaningfully ties USF to an organization that may provide a link to future students. (http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.coIJLROnGlF/b.3919285/k.FB2C/Big_Brothers_Big_Sisters_of_Will_and_Grundy_Counties.htm)

9P2 - Creating, Prioritizing and Building Relationships with Educational Organizations and Employers

Service and leadership are key components of USF’s mission and important elements in prioritizing relationships with the organizations that depend on our supply of students. Many area businesses rely on USF interns and graduates in order to maintain business operations. Also, school districts and health care organizations regularly hire USF graduates who have had clinical experiences or student teaching assignments with them. As students, they provide extra support in the organization while learning; once graduated, there is a seamless transition to employee.

Each of the colleges seeks and prioritizes relationships with employers that will contribute to a well-rounded educational experience for students. These relationships are additionally important in that they offer advisement regarding currency and effectiveness of the curriculum.

Since many faculty members emphasize experiential learning, they maintain close contacts with professionals in their areas of expertise, providing a most important connection with the educational organizations and employers that depend on the supply of USF students. Alumni Relations and coaches also provide an important link to the business world by maintaining relationships with alumni. Athletic alumni, in particular, have hired a high percentage of USF graduates during the past 20 years.

USF is a member of the Illinois Small College Placement Association (ISCPA) (http://www.iscpa.org/) and also provides career placement services to the benefit of both employers and students through NACElink, which allows employers to directly post positions. In addition, the Academic Advising and Career Services Department maintains direct relationships with some 75 companies and organizations. (http://www.stfrancis.edu/about/employment/career-services/)

USF also works with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), (http://www.naceweb.org/), the leading source of information, research and resources on the employment of the college educated. NACE forecasts trends in the job market; tracks legal issues in employment, the job search, and hiring practices; and provides college and employer professionals with benchmarks for their work. The American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE), (http://aaee.org/) is another resource for the university as it provides its members with direct access to research, publications and networking opportunities with colleagues, all focused upon the highest standards in educator preparation, recruitment, hiring and retention.
USF’s Solutions Resource Center was created and is dedicated to creating and continuously developing partnerships with area businesses and not-for-profit organizations. Solutions is highly visible in supporting the university’s “goal of being a responsive and effective partner in shaping the region’s future and economy by connecting university resources to community needs and providing its students with real world, problem-solving experiences…” Services include business consulting, continuing education, training, community outreach, etc. Students and faculty members provide or work with projects to the greatest extent possible, creating a foundation for future connection. (http://www.stfrancis.edu/business-solutions/)

9P3- Creating, Prioritizing and Building Relationships with Organizations Providing Services to Students

USF seeks partnerships with organizations that share our values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Compassion, and who will demonstrate these when dealing with our students and community. We expect these partners to be extensions of the university culture. Among the external partnerships that provide services to USF students are Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Sodexo food services and Gold’s Gym. A new relationship with PACE will provide shuttle service from the university’s main campus to its new Rialto City Center campus beginning in fall 2009.

Partnerships are identified, sought and maintained by various areas within the university in anticipation to student need and outsourcing some of these services have resulted in cost savings and increased service for students and the university.

Educational agreements are carefully evaluated by the colleges and academic departments to ensure the university’s high standards for educational experiences are met and that systems are readily accessible to students. These partnerships include the Performance Learning Systems (PLS) to offer a collaborative Teaching and Learning advanced degree program (http://www.stfrancis.edu/content/ed/pls.htm). Another example is the Bachelor of Science in Radiation Therapy is a 2+2 program, in which students first complete two years of liberal and pre-professional science education courses at the University of St. Francis, then apply for admission to the program at Swedish American Health System in Rockford, Ill. We have program completion agreements with Hines VA Hospital and Northwestern as well as Swedish American for our Allied Health programs.

Agreements have been made with outside practitioners for personal counseling and health and social services that are required by students and beyond the university’s in-house resources.

The library provides yet another example of seeking and maintaining partnerships for the benefit of students and the enhancement of their educational experience. The library partners with other libraries to share resources.

The incorporation of service-learning on a university-wide level is a critical goal of our 2006-2011 strategic plan. The university has taken the initial steps in the development and implementation of a service-learning program through a partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA. The goal at the end of the three-year period is to offer one service-learning course in each academic area and to be a leader in service-learning pedagogy in our region. The role of our VISTA volunteer is that of a partner in this endeavor with a key role in all phases of
development and implementation and we expect that increasing service learning will increase the interaction and partnerships with other organizations

9P4- Creating, Prioritizing and Building Relationships with Organizations Supplying Materials and Services

Stewardship of limited resources is essential to the USF mission. The university seeks partnerships with supply organizations that share its values and are committed to top quality service and the maximization of resources. We look for those who are innovative and cost conscious. These organizations must also share the university’s proactive stance on greenimg and preservation. Again, the university expects these partners to be extensions of the university culture.

In 2005, at the recommendation of the Board of Trustees and the president, USF established a Purchasing Department to monitor and approve large purchases, implement and enforce a university purchasing policy, pursue cost savings and provide all areas of purchasing support to the university community. Up until that time, no central entity was available to look for purchasing opportunities and ways in which to save the university money while utilizing professional ethics and our best business practices throughout the process.

9P5- Creating, Prioritizing and Building Relationships with Education Associations, External Agencies, Consortia Partners and the General Community

These relationships are sought and prioritized based on their ability to help the university fulfill mission and strengthen the institution, as well as offering opportunity for service and innovation.

At the institutional level, active memberships are maintained with the American Council on Education (ACE); Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI); Associated Colleges of the Chicago Area (ACCA); Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U); Association of Catholic Colleges & Universities (ACCU); Association of Governing Boards (AGB); Association of Franciscan Colleges & Universities (AFCU); Council for Higher Education (CHEA); Council of Independent Colleges (CIC); Federation of Illinois Independent Colleges & Universities (FIICU); Grundy County Chamber of Commerce; Higher Learning Commission; Illinois Campus Compact; Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce; South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium; Will County Center for Economic Development; New Lenox Chamber of Commerce; Lockport Chamber of Commerce; Tinley Park Chamber of Commerce; Will County Hispanic-Latino Coalition; Three Rivers Manufacturing Association; and Workforce Investment Board.

USF is also a charter member of the Online Consortium of Independent Colleges and Universities (OCICU), which was formed to advance academic opportunities for members by sharing online resources. (http://www.ocicu.org/)

Colleges, academic departments, administrative divisions and departments maintain active relationships that assist their area’s progress. These relationships are chosen to meet specific need with the overall purpose of strengthening, enhancing or expanding function and service.

As noted in the previous study, the president plays a personal role in seeking community partnerships and is either directly involved with them or has designated a representative for active participation and leadership. In this vein, USF has created and built very successful
relationships with government entities—park districts, city, county, state and federal—as well as with neighborhood groups. It has even created the highly innovative Collaboration of Care, which addresses the region’s need for affordable, quality health care utilizing the university’s Health and Wellness Center along with area hospitals and clinics and health care providers.

The Athletic Department has a strong affiliation with the Joliet Park District. Softball, football, golf and basketball programs all utilize park district facilities. Because, as an urban university, USF is primarily an off-campus athletic program, we also have collaborative arrangements with the City of Joliet, Joliet School District 86 and the local National Guard facility. Some of these were noted in more detail in the previous Systems Portfolio. Expansion of many of these partnerships is being sought.

9P6 - Ensuring that Partnership Relationships are Meeting our Needs

The varying needs of those involved in partnership relationships remain largely ensured by personal contact in planning and assessing as noted in 9P2 of the previous Systems Portfolio. Much progress has been made, though, in connecting these partnerships to Strategic Plan and division goals, an initiative of the Vice Presidents Council. The university has also instituted a process for creating, prioritizing, documenting and reviewing partnerships, which will begin in fall 2009.

9P7 - Creating and Building Relationships Between and Among Departments and Units and Ensuring Integration and Communication

While, as noted in the previous study, relationships within the institution had seemed to emerge on an as-needed basis, USF has made progress in this area with more internal partnerships forming to meet strategic goals. New program development, such as the Visual Arts and Music education majors, admission initiatives and imaging and marketing efforts have been areas in which collaboration has improved significantly.

The Strategic Marketing Communication Task Force, appointed by the president, consists of 25 members who come from throughout the university. Members act as ambassadors for imaging and marketing as well as provide direction and advice regarding planning and execution of initiatives.

The Campus Master Plan is another example of success in building internal relationships. The Campus Master Plan Committee not only consists of a cross-section of university and community members, but also engaged the entire university community in the planning process.

The University has a tradition of “pitching in” when needed, but a more focused Vice Presidents Council is providing more strategic direction for internal collaborations by offering stronger rationales connecting these projects to strategic plan and committing resources to support initiatives.

The university-wide retention program mandates internal communication among faculty, administrators and coaches. This program aids our students academically as well as helps to preserve the institution’s financial viability.
Integration and communication is ensured through direction by the president and vice presidents, through educational programming such as town meetings and internal “webinar” type programming.

RESULTS (R)

9R1- Measurement and Analysis of Building External and Internal Collaborative Relationships

Those relationships maintained to directly provide or enhance the educational experience are carefully assessed through the university’s academic assessment processes with additional assessment criteria often required by the academic unit. Those academic areas that have specialized accreditation undertake rigorous assessment to ensure the effectiveness of their programming and partnerships.

USF Business Solutions also employs a formal assessment process for its programming and partners. Within each category of service: consulting, training and development, and conferencing, client evaluations are conducted and compiled to analyze trends occurring in services.

Other partnerships—governmental, neighborhood, etc.—are gauged by participation, success of individual initiatives or activities, received funding or perceived good will.

As noted in 9I1, the University has created an approval process "to identify and develop mission-related partnerships" and a process for members of the USF community to identify, define and seek approval for proposed partnerships. See Addendum 9-2.

9R2- Performance Results in Building External and Internal Key Collaborative Relationships

Results for building, enhancing and expanding the university’s key collaborative relationships have overall been excellent. As noted repeatedly, outreach is central to the university’s mission, Franciscan tradition and strategic plan. The types of relationships that have been pursued and built have become more strategic to improve and develop the educational experience and commitment to quality that, in turn, have contributed to the institution’s overall imaging.

The number of partnerships has grown. Though partnerships may be pursued by different university sectors, all are essential to fulfilling the university’s mission and meeting the goals of Strategic Plan 2006-11.

The previous System Portfolio details many successful collaborative relationships, which are still in existence and many have been further enhances.

Following is one of the most exciting new collaborative relationships as an example of our success:

The University of St. Francis, City of Joliet, Rialto Square Theatre and the City Center Partnership have created a unique partnership that encompasses economic development, community/quality of life development, jobs creation and educational programming that extends to disadvantaged children in the community.
The University of St. Francis will move its Arts and Design Department program to the Rialto Square office complex in August 2009, creating a unique educational experience and vibrant artist community that will enhance the redevelopment of the downtown and the image of the city, its City Center and county seat. In keeping with its mission of quality education and service, USF has committed to providing community outreach to underserved populations while centered in the downtown area.

Research has shown that at the core of successful downtown redevelopments a major educational institution has been a key component just as important as commerce.

The partnership provides short- and long-term benefits, by providing:

- Increased foot traffic and potential business in Joliet’s City Center.
- A stream of revenue for the landmark theatre operations; the University of St. Francis will invest $5,210,194 over a 20-year lease of instructional and gallery space at the Rialto.
- Support for the new Rialto Arts District artist community
- Much-needed space for the growth of the University of St. Francis Arts and Design program.
- Increased educational and cultural outreach to underserved populations.
- The $3.8 million Rialto renovation project will create 100 construction jobs during the renovation and provide 30 tenant spaces. The renovation includes hospitality, meeting and banquet room space to generate additional revenue and activity in the city center.
- Some 80 to 100 students and faculty members will be brought to the downtown.
- Comprehensive integration of the City of Joliet/Will County downtown development plan and the city’s Near West Side revitalization plans, increasing economic development and quality of life for residents

The $3.8 million redevelopment plan has received unprecedented support:

- The City of Joliet has committed about $540,000 in funding over two years to support interest on a loan that the Rialto must take to finance the renovation project.
- State Sen. A.J. Wilhelmi committed $50,000 in state funding to support the project.
- The City Center Partnership downtown redevelopment organization will contribute $10,000 to the Rialto renovation.
- State Rep. Jack McGuire has prioritized the project on his list of appropriations for $10,000 should funding be allocated.
- The University of St. Francis, in partnership with PACE, will provide a shuttle service from the main campus to downtown Joliet for students, faculty and staff.

Will County is also considering financial support of the gallery project.

Planning for a second phase that will take the university’s Mass Communication Department to the downtown is underway. In this proposed project, the university will run the city’s community access cable television station, providing real-world learning experiences to students as well as much-needed community news and feature programming. The university’s radio station will also
relocate to the downtown. This will provide for even greater community and economic
development for the city center, another win-win multi-partner initiative.

Beginning in fall 2009, the Athletic Department will establish the USF Sports TV in
collaboration with community access cable television operations in Joliet and greater Will
County. USF’s academic programs will also be featured.

9R3- Performance Results of Processes for Building Collaborative Relationships in
Comparison with Other Higher Education Organizations and Organizations Outside of
Higher Education

While the University of St. Francis has a track record of successes in building collaborative
relationships, many are unique to the university’s mission, values and urban setting, so they have
not been compared to other institutions for assessment purposes. However, the university has
developed some relationships using the experience of other institutions as background
information.

IMPROVEMENTS (I)

9I1- Recent Improvements and Explanation of Performance Results for Building
Collaborative Relationships

In the previous study, it was noted that the university did not take a systematic approach to
seeking and developing partnerships and other collaborative initiatives, nor did it quantify the
resources committed to these initiatives or fully assess their effectiveness.

As called for by Strategic Plan 2006-11, the university has created an approval process “to
identify and develop mission-related partnerships.”

Five areas of partnerships have been identified and are pursued:

- Academic partnerships are those partnerships directly related to academic programming.
  These partnerships are initiated, approved and managed by the appropriate college. (i.e.
  nursing clinicals, student teaching, internships)
- Service partnerships are a learning or direct activity that require an equal or near-equal
  expenditure of resources from the university and its partner. Resources may include
  funding, facilities or human.
- Sponsorship partnerships occur when the university is host to an event or activity and
  expends university resources (funds, facilities, or human) to support an educational or
  community organization and/or function directly related to the university’s mission.
- Business partnerships are profit-generating projects managed by USF Solutions, which
  supports the university’s goal of being a responsive and effective partner in shaping the
  region’s future and economy by connecting university resources to community needs
  and providing its students with real world, problem-solving experiences within a liberal
  arts framework.
- Catholic organizations partnerships result in enhanced Catholic Franciscan charism for
  the institution.
A process has been established for members of the USF community to identify, define and seek approval for proposed partnerships. See Addendum 9-2.

In pursuing President Michael Vinciguerra’s “Corridors of Franciscan Engagement” as defined in the previous study, the University has also maintained or strengthened the noted existing partnerships through a variety of means. USF has also pursued exciting new partnerships such as the Rialto City Center campus.

**912- Culturing and Infrastructure in Selecting Specific Processes to Improve and Set Targets for Improved Performance Results in Building Collaborative Relationships**

As noted previously, outreach is central to the University’s mission, Franciscan tradition and strategic plan. Partnerships are created as the University recognizes a need—internal or external—or an opportunity for future expansion or quality enhancement. The University environment encourages entrepreneurship to the extent that it has formed a Center for Innovation, an academic resource and support service center for faculty and administrators. The center offers resources to assist in the growth and development of new academic markets and products, as well as in improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and quality. The Center for Innovation is to be an incubator for conceptualization and cultivation of new and creative ideas. Additionally, the center will provide financial resources through the start-up and growth stages.