Sawyer Business School Strategic Plan 2020
December 23, 2020

Institutional Overview

Located in the heart of downtown Boston, Suffolk University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. The University has three academic units: Law School, College of Arts & Sciences, and Sawyer Business School. As of Fall 2019, it enrolled 7,401 full and part-time students, with 5,060 undergraduate students, 1,224 masters students, and 1,117 law and doctoral students. Suffolk University is accredited by New England Commission of Higher Education, Inc. (NECHE formerly NEASC). The School of Management, now called the Sawyer Business School (SBS), first earned AACSB accreditation in 1989, was reaccredited in 1995, and maintained accreditation in 2004, 2009 and 2014; its accounting programs earned initial accreditation in 2001 and maintained accreditation in 2004, 2009 and 2014. Other programs with separate accreditation are public administration, accredited by NASPAA,[1] and healthcare management, accredited by CAHME.[2] SBS is one of only three schools in Massachusetts with both AACSB Business and Accounting accreditations (in fact, only 23% of more than 800 AACSB-accredited business schools have supplemental accounting accreditation). SBS has 2,222 undergraduate students and 922 graduate students with approximately 942 international students for the 2019-20 academic year. Additionally, SBS has 120 full-time participating faculty and 95 part-time supporting faculty (equivalent to a full-time size of 32 faculty) as of Fall 2020.

External Context and Key Challenges

Increases in per capita incomes and "demographic bulges" in many emerging economies, particularly China and India, have led to burgeoning demand for business education in recent years. At the same time, the perceived value of MBA degrees appears to have lessened, leading to declines in applications to US business schools across the board, as well as reduced business support for tuition reimbursement programs. Moreover, rapid aging in China and the increasing availability of quality business programs there and in other emerging economies will continue to exert pressure on applications to US business administration programs. Compounding these factors, as the perceived value of online programs grows, so will the range of choices available to prospective students independent of geographic location. This Plan addresses these trends through the enhancement of the value of our programs, particularly by building their experiential education components, continuous assessment and development of new programs that meet changing market needs, and the improvement and expansion of online formats, among other Plan initiatives. Although it is obvious that the current COVID-19 pandemic will have a major impact on the world economy and business education, at this point any specific effects remain purely speculative. This Plan therefore describes the strategic initiatives of the Sawyer Business School as of the first quarter of 2020.

The University's location provides important advantages. Its setting in the heart of Boston attracts full-time commuter students, international students, and part-time evening students from the Greater Boston area. With the addition of residence halls in the past 25 years, Suffolk has shifted from a "commuter school", attracting primarily from the local area, to a residential university. In addition to the overall benefits to the University arising from its central Boston location, SBS derives further advantages

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[1] Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration.
[2] Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education.

from the extraordinary dynamism of the Boston economy. Our recent graduate program marketing efforts have focused on Boston's local world-class clusters in Biotech, Finance, Healthcare, and High-Tech and our undergraduate outreach has focused on suburban, out-of-state and international students attracted to such a rich urban environment. Our students tell us that being in Boston is an important source of attraction to Suffolk, due to the many opportunities afforded by the city. Our location also affords us the opportunity to attract advisory board members, well-qualified faculty members, and members of the business, nonprofit and government communities to enhance our strong experiential education approach. We enjoy a range of distinctive relationships with regional business, nonprofit and government leaders. Our connections with these communities also afford students with networking opportunities which lead to internships and post-education employment.

Our location also brings some challenges. Being at the heart of one the most dynamic cities in the US, if not the world, means facing extremely high costs for physical space, leading to limitations in facilities, particularly for student space and housing. In addition, the Boston area is one of the most competitive markets for higher education in the United States. In particular, the Massachusetts state university system offers low cost programs to in-state residents, and six of the top 50 BSBA programs in the U.S. are located in the greater Boston market, with at least nine AACSB accredited MBA programs centered in the area. Competition in Boston and more generally in New England has increased in recent years as the size of college-age demographic cohorts has declined and is expected to continue to decline. This demographic shift, together with a growing gap between nominal tuition prices and median salaries, has caused declines in enrollment at many colleges and universities in the region. The feedback from our students points to the lack of a strong brand as a strategic weakness, and with it the need to convey a stronger value for money proposition. Our Plan thus gives priority to addressing these challenges, specifically by differentiating our offerings through their experiential education components, by continuously managing and improving our portfolio of offerings, and by increasing the value, flexibility and availability of our programs through high-quality online formats. With these and other differential factors in place, we will work closely with relevant University offices in the enhancement of our reputation and brand.

We envisage experiential education as a key differentiator of our programs, in combination with the unique asset of our location. Experiential learning gives our students the tools to take charge of their lives, providing a holistic approach to living and a process for adaptation and change. The experiential learning process helps students improve their performance in- and out-of-class, effectively learn new skills and concepts, and achieve their educational, career and lifetime goals. The process is a catalyst for the major dimensions of our educational approach: teamwork; problem solving and decision-making; knowledge transfer; continuous improvement; business development; leadership development, training and education, and even the development of thinking capability. We see the understanding of the learning process and the individual's approach to using it as the key to self-transformation and growth. Experiential learning thus empowers our students to learn from experience throughout their lives.

Suffolk's background as a commuter school catering to local part-time, first-generation students has created challenges for alumni giving. The University is now striving to engage a vibrant alumni base (approximately 82,000 for the university and 30,000+ for the Sawyer Business School) to contribute to the University and the Business School both in material ways and to help build reputation and opportunities for our students. This is a slow process, however, which means that Suffolk will remain primarily tuition-driven for the foreseeable future. The University maintains a conservative fiscal strategy under which endowment draws (investment return designated for operations) primarily support strategic incremental investments.

Strategic Foundations and Planning Process

The foundations for the Plan were the School's recently updated Mission and Vision statements, and the Suffolk 2025 Strategic Plan, approved by the Suffolk University Board of Trustees in June 2019.[3]

SBS Mission: _The Sawyer Business School provides students a world-class business and public service education. Our engaged faculty leverages a central Boston location and fosters collaborations with local, national, and global community partners to generate high-quality scholarship and enhance the integration of classroom lessons with experiential learning. In doing so, we graduate global-minded, knowledgeable, and socially responsible professionals who embrace innovation and change._

SBS Vision: _We foster transformative experiences that cultivate global-minded citizens who advance knowledge, lead positive change, and create value for society._

The plan was initially developed by an ad-hoc committee established by the former SBS Dean, William O'Neill, in December 2019. The committee was co-chaired by Associate Deans Michael Behnam and Catherine McCabe, and Professor Carlos Rufín, Chair of the SBS Faculty Governance Council. Other committee members represented every SBS department (except for the Strategy and International Business Department, represented by Prof. Rufín), and included both senior and junior faculty, as follows: Prof. Abu Jalal, Finance; Prof. Chaim Letwin, Entrepreneurship; Prof. Kate Li, Information Systems and Operations Management; Prof. Peter Rivard, Healthcare Management; Prof. Jason Peterson, Business Law and Ethics; Prof. Tracey Riley, Accounting; Prof. Sheila Webber, Management; Prof. Mujde Yuksel, Marketing; and Prof. Aimee Williamson, Institute for Public Service.

The committee began its work in January 2020, meeting periodically and generated a complete version of the Strategic Plan at the beginning of the summer. In late July, our new Dean, Dr. Amy Zeng, assumed the leadership of the Sawyer Business School. The leadership change did not cause any interruption of the work but provided an opportunity for Dean Zeng to share some of her initial ideas and new perspectives with the group. Dean Zeng has actively participated in the group discussions and the completion of a final version of the Plan. For the preparation of the plan, the committee sought inputs from separate undergraduate and graduate student focus groups (see appendix for details on the organization of the focus groups) and from a variety of SBS and University officials, including Dr. Julie Sandell, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Laura Sander, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration. Furthermore, the committee received feedback on various versions of the Plan from Dr. Dan Connolly, Chairperson of the AACSB Visiting Team; former Dean Bill O'Neill; the SBS Alumni Board; the SBS Dean's Cabinet, which represents non-Suffolk stakeholders; and SBS staff and faculty, through department meetings and an anonymous survey.

Strategic Initiatives

On the basis of the strategic foundations noted above, as well as existing strategic initiatives and the evolving external context, SBS will pursue the following **four** Strategic Initiatives:

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[3] https://boston.suffolk.edu/suffolk2025/pdf/executive_summary.pdf

1 **Faculty Excellence:** Sustain an engaged and diverse faculty whose high-quality scholarship, teaching, practice and influence within and beyond the classroom supports our mission and realizes our vision.

2 **Educational Experience:** Deliver a world-class transformative educational experience through leadership in experiential education among business schools, including cutting-edge programs that span functional areas.

3 **Educational Outcomes:** Invest heavily in the professional behavior and career success of our students through the mix of skills, experiences and values instilled by the world-class education we provide, including a global mindset and social responsibility; and promote lifelong learning across the programs and services we offer to students, alumni and our community partners, enhancing their ability to create, leverage and lead innovation and positive change.

4 **Brand Recognition:** As a result of the previous initiatives and of effective outreach efforts, be recognized as a leading business school regionally, nationally and internationally by our stakeholders and peers, attracting prospective students worldwide and donors from our alumni community and other support groups.

Below, each one of these Strategic Initiatives is developed in terms of the following components: (i) goals to be accomplished within each initiative; (ii) activities to be undertaken in pursuit of each goal; (iii) key resources required to undertake the activities; and (iv) metrics to be used in assessing progress towards the goal and the impacts of our activities on our stakeholders and on society as a whole. We want to make three special notes here. First, given the enormous impacts of the pandemic on the current and future states of higher education, we consider this Plan to be an evolving product that is subject to frequent revisits and revisions for the coming couple of years. Second, the School, especially the Dean's Office, will soon make decisions as to who would take accountability for overseeing and monitoring the progress of each Initiative, as well as suggesting areas for fine-tuning, realignment and revision. Third, Suffolk University has established a well-thought Business Continuity Plan (BCP) process administered by the Office of Risk Management, and uses an online tool called Suffolk Ready, stored on the cloud-based software application Workday, to organize and document continuity plans. The SBS Dean's Office closely monitors the currency of the School's BCP.

Strategic Initiative 1: Faculty Excellence

Sustain an engaged and diverse faculty whose high-quality scholarship, teaching, practice and influence within and beyond the classroom supports our supports our mission and realizes our vision.

Goal and Review Cycle	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
1.1 Provide strong and inclusive orientation as well as guidance and mentoring to support all faculty members.	1.1.1 Actively mentor all tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty to monitor and encourage progress toward tenure as well as career planning, fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion across our faculty. 1.1.2 Support faculty progress towards teaching excellence and knowledge relevance that fulfills the needs of our diverse student body. 1.1.3 Closely collaborate with both internal and external partners to cultivate, recruit and retain a diverse faculty group	Administrative support for organization of mentoring and other professional development programs within a knowledge management program for faculty. Senior faculty commitment and time for mentoring. Membership dues and sponsorship fees with relevant external partners	Formal orientation and mentoring programs. Developmental performance evaluation and mentoring processes. Faculty attraction (applicants and yield) and retention. Faculty diversity against population diversity. Tenure and promotion rates, for all faculty and for faculty of underrepresented backgrounds.
1.2 Encourage a culture of innovation and global collaboration in scholarship and practice-oriented research.	1.2.1 Provide opportunities for our faculty to engage non-Suffolk scholars, thought leaders and practitioners on a global scale. 1.2.2 Identify ways for faculty to share their intellectual contributions and collaborate with each other and with off-campus colleagues across the world in research and innovation initiatives. 1.2.3 Train faculty in grant proposal writing and assist them to obtain external funding.	Budget allocations and administrative support for visiting scholar positions. A point of contact or a central office to coordinate and develop channels for collaborations and communications.	Research presentations and visiting scholar positions for outside scholars. Scholarly publications with co-authorship within and across departments, across academic units, as well as across regions and campuses Grant writing workshops, and internal and external faculty research grant awards.
1.3 Elevate the School's intellectual contribution profile to help improve the School's visibility.	1.3.1 Encourage faculty to engage with the academy through publications and service to scholarly media, groups, and events. 1.3.2 Maintain and communicate relevant metrics of intellectual contribution impacts.	Budget allocations for faculty research, travel and conference participation. Administrative support for promoting faculty spotlights and achievements, as well as for external funding research, application and administration.	Scholarly publications and quality metrics and criteria, including citations. Journal reviewer or editor roles. Conference and workshop presentations and participation as reviewers, panelists, moderators, discussants, or organizers.

Strategic Initiative 2: Educational Experience

Deliver a world-class transformative educational experience through leadership in experiential education among business schools, including cutting-edge programs that span functional areas.

Goal and Time Horizon	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
2.1 Deepen a learning culture that embraces the Philosophy of Experiential Education developed by Dr. David Kolb.	2.1.1 Design a roadmap and implement all learning experiences around Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle framework. 2.1.2 Collaborate with the university-wide Center for Experiential Learning. 2.1.3 Create opportunities for faculty to enhance knowledge, expertise and innovation in experiential teaching.	Budgetary allocations for faculty training in Experiential Education. Faculty time for pedagogical training and development.	Number of required and elective courses incorporating the Experiential Learning Cycle and assessment of the learning outcomes. Faculty and staff participation in training programs, and in Center for Experiential Learning programming and activities.
2.2 Create learning experiences for students linking the content and skills across courses, semesters and disciplines.	2.2.1 Incorporate research-based learning and innovation projects with companies, institutions, and/or non-profit organizations into courses, internships and programs that engage students in high-impact experientials.	Faculty's commitment, collaboration and sharing of best practices, as well as a curriculum fostering the desired linkages.	Number of high-impact internships and course-related experiential projects with external organizations by program, and associated showcases and highlights over social media; at least one high-impact experiential engagement per academic year and student.
2.3 Expand our corporate, public, non-profit, and educational partnerships locally, nationally, and globally to enrich experiential education.	2.3.1 Develop stronger connections between SBS and diverse communities including Boston's world-class clusters through more robust, comprehensive partnerships with corporate, public, non-profit, and educational organizations.	Administrative support for identification and management of external partner relationships.	Number of partnerships with organizations from major clusters in Greater Boston region resulting in experiential projects for students. Diversity of partnerships across corporate, public, non-profit, and educational sectors and locations resulting in experiential projects for students.

Goal and Time Horizon	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
2.4 Design, deliver, and improve degree program curricula to meet learning goals and current or anticipated market needs.	2.4.1 Continue to add and assess specialized degrees, online offerings and upskilling certificates, exploiting opportunities to expand programs in areas that are relevant for today's business, public, and nonprofit organizations, while drawing down programs in areas of declining relevance. 2.4.2 Engage stakeholders through program and departmental advisory boards, alumni engagement and feedback, employment outcomes for recent graduates, and professional association guidance. 2.4.3 Explore new opportunities in artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, cybersecurity, fintech, biotech, supply chain, hospitality management and others	Budgetary and administrative allocations for development and delivery of new programs and offerings (marketing, administrative support, faculty, technology resources). A centralized monitoring and reporting mechanism for tracking and reporting professional association memberships and participation in association activities.	Creation and revision of specialized degrees and non-degree offerings in different modalities. Employment outcomes and success stories for recent graduates (percent employed and type of job and employer). Faculty and staff participation in professional association leadership and activities.
2.5 Increase alumni engagement across all SBS activities.	2.5.1 Increase alumni involvement in department and program advisory boards, alumni guest lecturing and teaching, experiential education projects with alumni-led companies, and alumni participation in career fairs, workshops and mentoring program.	A centralized management and coordination team for identifying, contacting, and organizing the involvement of alumni. Closer partnership with the Alumni Office	# of participating alumni in department and program advisory boards, guest lectures, course teaching, workshops, career fairs, and experiential education projects. Alumni participation in donations to SBS and average donation size.

Strategic Initiative 3: <u>Educational Outcomes</u>

Invest heavily in the professional behavior and career success of our students through the mix of skills, experiences and values instilled by the world-class education we provide, including a global mindset and social responsibility; and promote lifelong learning across the programs and services we offer to students, alumni and our community partners, enhancing their ability to create, leverage and lead innovation and positive change.

Goal	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
3.1 Offer an increasingly diverse and complete global experience.	3.1.1 Embed an understanding of global issues throughout undergraduate and graduate curricula. 3.1.2 Continue to hire and retain international faculty. 3.1.3 Develop dual and joint degree programs with international partners. 3.1.4 Include student-centered perspectives on inclusion and diversity in academic curricula, fostering a culture that embraces diversity.	Administrative support and faculty time for development and delivery of dual and joint degree programs. Administrative support for career orientation for students from diverse and international backgrounds, and for organization of cultural exchanges and experiences.	Global and diversity-related concepts and frameworks across courses and curricula. Global and diversity-related learning outcomes for graduating students. Enrollment in dual and joint-degree programs with international partners. Social, cultural, and geographic diversity of graduating classes.
3.2 Enhance our students' adaptive skills.	3.2.1 Integrate current and emerging technologies, including the application of statistical tools and techniques, data management, data analytics, and information technology throughout the curriculum. 3.2.2 Explore ways to incorporate skill development on adaptability. 3.2.3 Provide professional development for faculty and staff on incorporating adaptive skills into courses and co-curricular programming.	Multi-year plan and investment in maintaining and developing faculty with expertise in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics, information technology, and others Budgetary allocations for faculty and staff training in adaptive skill development and pedagogy.	Courses covering or requiring use of programming languages such as Python and/or R, data analytics, or information technology. A new seminar series dedicated to emerging technologies and applications Adaptable skill levels in graduating students. Number of faculty and staff trained in adaptive skills pedagogy.

Goal	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
3.3 Provide SBS students and alumni with the necessary competencies to build successful careers in a rapidly changing world.	3.3.1 Design deliberate career education journeys for all our students embedded throughout program curricula and including specific actions and outcomes for students to ensure competency acquisition. 3.3.2 Develop student-centered events for networking and making connections with employers. 3.3.3 Develop and maintain partnerships with businesses and professional organizations, particularly those embedded in Boston's major clusters, providing opportunities for students to gain relevant skills and experiences.	Coordinated administrative support for organization of events and workshops. Centralized administrative support for identification and management of external partner relationships.	Competency updating and embedding across curricula and extracurricular opportunities. Assessment mechanism of competency acquisition by students. Number of student-centered networking events and extra-curricular professional development workshops. Number of external partnerships and internships involving alumni and entities in Boston's major clusters.
3.4 Invest in and expand online education offerings.	3.4.1 Examine online degree completion opportunities. 3.4.2 Develop and promote benchmarks for successful online teaching. 3.4.3 Offer instruction and mentorship to faculty interested in online teaching through both formally structured and informal approaches.	Faculty time for online degree and course design, mentoring, and continuous improvement.	New online offerings. Formal benchmarks for online course design and teaching quality. Formal orientation and mentoring programs. Employment and salary outcomes for graduates of online programs.
3.5 Expand corporate and lifelong education.	3.5.1 Assess and build on our existing certificate programs to maintain a relevant portfolio of offerings focused on key skill areas for business. 3.5.2 Research potential offerings in certificate programs, badges, and other upskilling opportunities.	Market analysis of certificate program design and offerings.	Changes in portfolio of offerings in certificate programs, badges, and stackable and upskilling opportunities. Enrollment in certificate programs, badges, and other online offerings.

Strategic Initiative 4: <u>Brand Recognition</u>

As a result of the previous initiatives and of effective outreach efforts, be recognized as a leading business school by our stakeholders and peers, attracting prospective students worldwide and donors from our alumni community and other support groups.

Goal	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
4.1. Develop a stronger SBS brand.	4.1.1 Develop a comprehensive branding strategy to better position SBS in the competitive market. 4.1.2 Systematically track data and comparative study results of educational quality and outcomes to promote the SBS education and value, and to enhance the SBS brand. 4.1.3 Promote successes and accomplishments in research and identify other "points of pride," in coordination with University marketing efforts, and involving students and faculty.	Reorganizing the SBS marketing and communication leadership and team. Budgetary allocations for Search Engine Optimization capability (as part of University marketing resources).	Brand impressions (media mentions, other measures of awareness appropriate to the various audiences targeted, organic search visits to SBS website). Data and results (Applications, yield, enrollment, and graduation rates) tracking scorecard and frequency. SBS news updates published on website and supplied to other media. Various SBS newsletters and faculty and student blogs and social media addressed to different target groups to increase the name exposure. SBS brand recall among key stakeholders (prospective students and families, alumni, professional communities, employers, current students).
4.2 Publicize and promote SBS reputation in experiential education.	4.2.1 Identify and contact external influencers receptive to SBS. 4.2.2 Leverage our alumni and top employer networks for reputational purposes. 4.2.3 Track and actively promote successes and accomplishments.	More focused and coordinated effort in SBS marketing unit and in developing more consistent and unifying messages.	Brand impressions (media mentions, other measures of awareness appropriate to the various audiences targeted). SBS news updates published on website and supplied to other media. Number of alumni involved in promotional activities and new market outreach. Brand reputation in experiential learning.

Goal	Activities	Resources Required	Progress and Impact Metrics
4.3 Improve SBS' position in key rankings	4.3.1 Identify appropriate categories for rankings and key factors in each ranking that we can act upon. 4.3.2 Track progress in key factors.	Using ranking as one of the KPI's as a goal for SBS marketing team.	Key ranking changes. Number of rankings for departments, programs and signature experiences.
4.4 Improve business and social impacts on our communities.	4.4.1 Develop more service learning projects embedded in courses or available as extracurricular activities. 4.4.2 Showcase experiential learning projects with external organizations that have positive direct impacts on organizations and society. 4.4.3 Foster faculty research with positive direct impacts on organizations and society. 4.4.4 Leverage our expertise, best practices and connections in Public Services and Healthcare Administration to expand our community engagement and impact	A centralized team to identify partner organizations, engage them, and organize activities or projects with them, including research projects. Grant and development opportunities in service learning	Service learning and beneficial experiential learning or research projects. Faculty, administration, staff, and student participation and pro bono hours. SBS brand reputation among external stakeholders (prospective students and families, alumni, professional communities, employers). Success stories and spotlights showcasing the exemplary community engagement cases