Charting Excellence Together, Armstrong’s Strategic Plan
2012 SPARC II Year End Report to the President
September 10, 2012  (Version 4.2)
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Section I: Introduction

In the spring of 2010, President Bleicken appointed the Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC), comprised of faculty, students, administrators, and staff. For the next nine months, SPARC quickly established a planning process, engaging the campus community as well as alumni and interested Savannah individuals through open forums, online feedback tools, and individual conversations. Taking this information into account, and through considerable deliberation, SPARC identified and studied the university’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. During this process, six distinct issues emerged, and these became the foundation for the proposed strategic plan.

In late November, 2010, SPARC developed a strategic plan with a definitive mission statement and a clear vision statement. Significantly, the plan also articulates a set of values that serve as the lens through which faculty members, students, staff, and administrators view their roles, communications, interactions, and performance. Most importantly, the focus of the new strategic plan is Armstrong’s unwavering commitment to student success. The plan became known as Charting Excellence Together, Armstrong’s Strategic Plan. This document was submitted to Dr. Bleicken and the President’s Council and was adopted as the set of guiding principles for the university.

This strategic plan continues to chart a path towards excellence for our university. Throughout its development, a realistic assessment of the university’s current status and needs was established, but the plan also incorporated aspirations to provide a distinctive learning environment that is student-focused and teaching-centered. Through its continued implementation, which began in January of 2011, the plan continues to provide an image of what Armstrong can become in the next three to five years, with room for adaptation to an ever-changing environment.

A key implementation component was the continuation of SPARC’s efforts by creating a group identified as SPARC II. This body was constituted with the charge of monitoring progress on the strategic plan. Members of the council began a series of monitoring activities that culminated in a planning workshop held in May of 2012. An outcome of the workshop was for SPARC II to produce the first “annual report”, which describes campus activities aligned with the strategic plan.

As a result, this report will provide the President, the campus community, and external constituents an overview of the following:

1. Strategic Plan Implementation Activities
2. Strategic Plan Communication Efforts and SPARC II Monitoring Activities
3. SPARC II organizational changes relative to scope, focus, and succession of members
4. Recommendations to President and Presidents Cabinet regarding continued strategic plan implementation

**Section II: Strategic Plan Implementation Activities**
During the implementation phase, a key strategy was the creation of SPARC grants. This had two positive effects. It demonstrated the university’s commitment to supporting the vision and mission of the plan while encouraging creativity from the campus community regarding the plan’s two primary goals of student success and transformative learning. As a result, six grants were approved from 27 submissions for fiscal year 2012. During the Spring 2012 SPARC II workshop, committee members heard from all grant recipients and two other presenters whose initiatives were deemed strong examples of strategic alignment. Each project is listed below with the suggestions and feedback from SPARCI included. A complete summary of activities and outcomes for each project are included in the appendix of this report.

1. **SPARC GRANT:** Armstrong LGBTQ, Diversity Initiative  
   **Responsible Individual:** Dr. Ella Howard, Assistant Professor, Department of History  
   **Summary of Project:** Provide training for faculty and staff and campus activities that increase awareness of LGBTQ issues.  
   **Summary of Project:** Emphasizing the core value of respecting diversity, this Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Diversity Initiative created two programs raising awareness of the concerns facing the LGBTQ community include Safe Space training program and LBGTQ film series.  
   **SPARC II Feedback:**  
   - To involve other students outside the LGBTQ community, consider targeting specific student leader groups for the program (i.e., RAs, Navigate leaders, Ambassadors, SGA executive team)  
   - Include police representation on identified advisory committee  
   - Designate a point person to facilitate program continuation  
   - Forward to PC the need to consider facilities, specifically a gender-neutral restroom  
   - FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Continue with SPARC funding

2. **SPARC GRANT:** Initiative for Civic Engagement (I.C.E.)  
   **Responsible Individual:** Dr. Jason Tatlock, Assistant Professor, Department of History  
   **Summary of Project:** Focus was on development of a “Speakers Bureau” providing opportunities for alumni and members of the local and global communities to interact with students, faculty, and staff though various curricular and co-curricular speaking venues.  
   **SPARC II Feedback:**  
   - Market it through the internal newsletter, with a brochure (i.e., distribute to new faculty during orientation)
• Ask faculty about speakers that they may already have coming to campus and contact individuals to see if they can be added to the bureau
• Consider identifying all the potential areas to which a speaker could appeal in order to attract a broader audience (moving it beyond just a classroom setting)
• Facilitate extra credit by organizing a sign-in system
• Help promote departmental speaker series—standing agenda item at Academic Affairs Council for getting information
• FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Continue with SPARC funding

3. **SPARC GRANT:** S.E.R.V.E.S.: Support, Encouragement, and Resources Vital for Educational Success  
**Responsible Individual:** Ms. Susan Cooke, Director of Office of Field Experiences, Clinical Practice & Partnerships, and Ms. Allison Scott, Advisor and Coordinator of Recruitment, Retention and Student Success  
**Summary of Project:** Implement a comprehensive advisement program for students in the College of Education  
**SPARC II Feedback:**  
• Identify interested faculty who will serve as mentors to supplement participating community members  
• Work with other colleges to replicate program components in those settings  
• FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Continue with SPARC funding

4. **SPARC GRANT:** Enhancing Education for Teens Through Literacy  
**Responsible Individual:** Dr. John Hobe, Department Head, Childhood and Exceptional Student Education and Associate Professor  
**Summary of Project:** Provide opportunities for Armstrong students to mentor elementary school students in reading and learning.  
**SPARC II Feedback:**  
• Project focuses on strategic goal 5 but needs to find ways to connect to the overarching goal of student success—needs to involve more of our students  
• Connect with pre-education courses  
• Connect with other campus initiatives—Goizueta/Lumina, AAMI  
• FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Continue with SPARC funding
5. **SPARC GRANT**: Parent and Family Program  
**Responsible Individual**: Ms. Brenda Forbis, Director of Marketing and Communication  
**Project Summary**: Enhance relationship between Armstrong and student families.  
**SPARC II Feedback**:
- Need to consider ways to connect with parents who may not have access to technology or do not highly utilize technology  
- FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Do not continue with SPARC funding; the program has become integrated into Student Affairs Office

6. **SPARC GRANT**: Armstrong Collaborate & Connect, Bringing the Campus, Programs & Events to Students, Potential Students, Alumni & Community  
**Responsible Individual**: Dr. Kristen Betts, Director of Online Learning  
**Project Summary**: Utilize Blackboard Collaborate technology to enhance Armstrong’s connectivity to the world of information and ideas.  
**SPARC II Feedback**:
- Need to continue to collaborate with other groups on campus  
- Need to consider how to get the information about Collaborate disseminated to a broader audience  
- Need to be sure that campus has the appropriate infrastructure to support Collaborate  
- Need to consider how to increase relevancy of presentations so appeals to broader audience  
- FY 13 Funding Recommendation: Do not continue with SPARC funding

7. **Project**: Health Professions Residential Interest Group Initiative  
**Responsible Individual**: Ms. Corrine Ackerson-Jones, Coordinator of Recruitment and Retention, College of Health Professions  
**Program Summary**: Enhance student success among freshman in the College of Health Professions through tutoring and advising in small residential interest groups  
**SPARC II Feedback**:
- Consider managing faculty expectations better as it relates to student tracking surveys  
- Explore best practices—how do other institutions scale up this type of program?  
- Consider making *Strategies for Success* a mandatory course if in the RIG  
- Examine the student data and identify students who may be at risk but have the potential for success

8. **Project**: CAMINO Latino Student Success Initiative and Goizueta Foundation Award initiatives
**Responsible Individual:** Ms. Melody Rodriguez, Director & Founder, Hispanic Outreach & Leadership at Armstrong (HOLA)

**Project Summary:** Increase recruitment, retention and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students.

**SPARC II Feedback:**
- Consider instituting an advisory group
- Explore potential for more academic partnerships (i.e., articulation agreements)
- Promote diversity hiring for faculty and staff
- Consider how to share the work of the programs since it is a good model to replicate
- Provide additional institutional resources to further the work of the project

**Section III: Strategic Plan Communication Efforts And SPARC II Monitoring Activities**

Described below are specific highlights of university activities during the rollout phase of the strategic plan. Other noteworthy academic and administrative unit activities may have occurred within sub-units but were not reported to SPARC II.

**Spring Semester 2011: Presentation of the plan to all stakeholders**
- President’s Cabinet reviewed and approved the plan in January, 2011
- President presented the plan to following key constituents:
  - Internal organizations: Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, Student Government Association
  - Faculty and staff during Spring Semester Convocation
  - Boards: Foundation Board, Alumni Board, EPFI
- All groups received a booklet, *Charting Excellence Together, Armstrong’s Strategic Plan*
- President formally presented strategic plan during Spring Convocation in January 2011
- External constituents received the news in the spring edition of *Armstrong* magazine
- The plan was added to the SPARC website and other key pages such as the President’s page

**Summer/Fall Semester 2011**
- Booklets, posters, table tents were distributed to audiences across campus
  - Deans/department heads for distribution to faculty
  - Student housing
  - All campus departments
- Student Union TV monitors began to display the plan components (which still continues regularly today)
- Fall semester convocation included an update on activities that related to the strategic plan
- @Armstrong internal newsletter summarized the plan
- Discussion with business, military, government and community leaders at Community Summit, October 2011
“No Wrong Door” customer service training presented an exercise where each staff member related their job/responsibilities to the strategic plan

Updates on SPARC website

Human Resources includes the strategic plan booklet in new employee packets

In addition, leaders in each administrative and academic unit were involved in campus wide activities designed to help drive the plan down through all areas of the campus community. SPARC II started the monitoring process during this phase as well. Highlights identified on the SPARC website include the following.

- February 8-9, 2011  Key university administrators met with Dr. Madeleine Adler, Penson and Associates, who facilitated a 2-day process assisting key university divisions and planning and assisting with the Strategic Plan implementation process.

- March 3-4, 2011  SPARC II met with Dr. Madeleine Adler, Penson and Associates, to review and discuss charge of SPARC II. Specifically, Dr. Adler assisted SPARC II in outlining an implementation process to include an interview process with key university divisions during Spring 2011.

- March 25, 2011  SPARC II met to outline and implement SPARC Grant RFP and award process and timeline. SPARC II also divided into sub-teams and discussed format for division interviews.

- April 2011  SPARC II sub teams met with representatives from Academic Affairs, Business and Finance, Advancement and Student Affairs in an interview format. The focus and outcome was to help each division identify and report specific work being accomplished to help implement the strategic plan.

- April 2011 & August 2011  SPARC Grant Process, Phase I & II

- May 2012  SPARC II Spring 2012 Workshop

- August 2012  SPARC Grant recipients and other special projects highlighted by President Bleicken at Fall convocation via Armstrong produced video

For the spring 2012 SPARC II workshop, the council requested that Vice Presidents summarize initiatives aligned with the strategic plan that their components implemented during the year. The goal was to have a conversation with the Vice Presidents regarding progress being made on the strategic priorities that were collectively set as a group during Fall 2011. SPARC II feedback and suggestions to each area is as follows. Each Vice Presidents full report is included in the appendix, and a summary is found immediately below.
**Academic Affairs**

1. Identify specific strategies being implemented for non-traditional students
2. Develop recruitment and retention plan for faculty with a focus on diversity
3. Consider how to engage deans and department chairs in meaningful strategic planning so it is taken seriously and not seen as a perfunctory exercise
4. Continue to use data while being intentional with recruitment efforts
5. Develop triage system solution for incoming telephone calls for Office of Financial Aid
6. Support mandatory training of faculty who will be teaching online courses

**Student Affairs**

1. The student Tuesday/Thursday emails are a positive communication means
2. Need to prioritize the strategic initiatives for the entire unit; identify division level priorities and then collaborate with other VPs
3. Need to consider designating a fund from Student Activity Fees that can be used to fund individual students (i.e., undergraduate research presentation) versus only funding student organizations

**Business and Finance**

1. Continue efforts regarding image building by creating less formal and more conversational interactions
2. Sustainability initiatives are very positive
3. Try to avoid forcing connections to strategic goal; consider the top priorities that have been identified for student success and transformative learning inside and outside the classroom and ask, “How can Business and Finance support these priorities?”
4. Communicate to campus community how the budgeting process has been changed to align with strategic plan

**Advancement**

1. Communicating how the university’s fundraising priorities were developed would enable SPARC II members to understand context and scope
2. The concept of a university email address remaining with a graduate for a period of time is a positive approach to alumni development
3. Fundraising was listed as #4 on handout but identified as the main priority; fundraising should be listed #1

**Section IV: Recommendations Regarding Future SPARC II Monitoring Activities**

- **Recommendation One:** Change SPARC II membership composition and rotation
  1. All members should be appointed to a two-year term
  2. Current members would continue for one more year with half of membership (including one co-chair) to rotate off in May 2013; the remaining half of mem-
bership would rotate off May 2014, therefore each year one half of the group would remain and one half would be new members.

3. As members rotate on and off, the President should publicly recognize their service.

4. Co-chairs meet with the President in January for a midyear update to include recommendations for new membership.

5. Membership beginning Fall 2012 should number 15 and include the following:
   - Two faculty representatives from each college
   - One dean representative
   - One Library representative,
   - One Student Affairs representative
   - One Business and Finance representative
   - One Advancement representative
   - One Academic Affairs representative (staff)
   - One student representative
   - The university Chief of Staff (*ex officio*)

   Co-chairs should come from the membership of the committee. Each year, one co-chair should rotate off the committee.

- **Recommendation Two: Enhance future SPARC II monitoring activities**
  1. Continue SPARC II spring planning workshop
  2. Increase interactions between President’s Cabinet and SPARC II
  3. Working with President’s Cabinet, ask administrative academic units (to include college deans) to submit strategic plans to SPARC II for review and comment
  4. SPARC II should meet at least twice a semester for the life of the plan identifying strategic themes to engage conversation around; examples include but are not limited to Information Technology Services, college deans, academic department chairs/administrative division directors.

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**Section V: Recommendations and Suggestions Regarding Continued Strategic Plan Implementation**

- **Recommendation One: Continue SPARC grant funding for FY 13.**
  1. During each summer, 2-3 members of SPARC II serve as committee to update grant process
  2. Grant process should be announced by August 1 of each academic year
  3. SPARC II must improve communication regarding the SPARC grant funding process, use of funds, and reporting requirements. Tactics to better communicate include publication of annual report, web posting of spring workshop recorded presentations, and partnering with college deans and division heads in pushing message of grant opportunities.
4. SPARC should plan and hold pre-submission workshops/forums to better facilitate questions and explain submission requirements. A key outcome is to provide clarity regarding partnership/collaborator roles and communication, and defining in greater detail project outcomes and assessment expectations.

➢ **Recommendation Two**: Continue SPARC grant funding for FY 12 recipients as recommended in section III. FY 12 SPARC Grant recipients approved for continuance include:

1. SPARC GRANT: "Armstrong LGBTQ, Diversity Initiative"
2. SPARC GRANT: "Campus and Community Engagement"
3. SPARC GRANT: “Enhancing Education for Teens Through Literacy”
4. SPARC GRANT: "S.E.R.V.E.S.: Support, Encouragement, and Resources Vital for Educational Success"

➢ **Recommendation Three**: More actively enhance campus awareness of implementation efforts

1. A summary of this report should be disseminated early each fall semester to campus leaders of academic and administrative units
2. SPARC II efforts should be outlined during Fall Convocation
3. SPARC II must create a more consistent, updated and interactive web site

➢ **Recommendation Four**: Re-deploy the customer service initiative “No Wrong Door”, with the responsibility for implementation and accountability residing with President’s Cabinet members.

➢ **Recommendation Five**: University divisions/Vice Presidents should align their unit strategic plans regarding formatting and reporting of progress and success for FY 13.

1. Based on the variance of Vice Presidents report formatting during the 2012 spring workshop, Vice Presidents should collaborate early in Fall 2012 to ensure clarity regarding the university Strategic Plan including specific responsibilities towards planning, execution and reporting.
### Section VI: Appendices

#### 1) 2012 Spring Workshop Presentations & Summaries:

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<td>Presenters from the College of Education: Dr. John Hobe, Department Head, Childhood and Exceptional Student Education and Associate Professor Allen Berger, Temporary Assistant Professor</td>
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#### 2) 2012 Spring Workshop Vice President Summaries