Improve Retention, Improve Lives

Stacie Hughes

DBA, MBA, CPA, CMA, CFM, CFE, CGMA, FCPA, NDCCDP

stacie.hughes@athens.edu

BACKGROUND

Community colleges provide services and resources that support and sustain society. Declining enrollment and persistently lagging retention rates at community colleges place the well-being of students, institutions, and society at risk.

Public 2-Year Institutions Enrollment[1]

Full-Time Student Retention Rates[2]
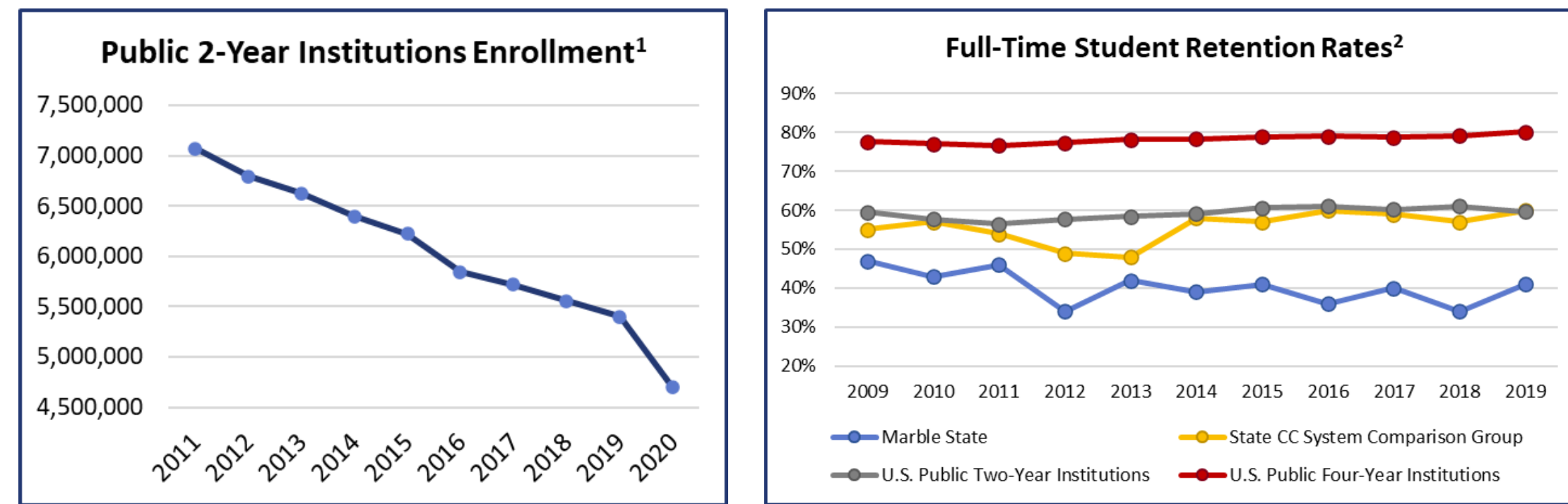
DATA COLLECTION & METHODOLOGY

Data collection consisted of two major categories:

1. Comprehensive review of frameworks, best practices and benchmarks, and methods.
2. Examination of institutional documents and data and information-gathering interviews.

The methodology included a customized framework for evaluating retention practices at community colleges.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on a gap analysis, what innovative and student-centered solutions will secure and sustain higher retention year over year at Marble State Community & Technical College, enabling the institution to fulfill its mission?

RESULTS

Due to a lack of backup and succession planning and the significant reliance on a single student success specialist, the optimal solution determined by the methodological analysis and agreed upon by representatives of Marble State is to:

Increase student success resources by adding staff to support current and expand future retention and intervention efforts and mitigate risk to operations.

A holistic framework for analyzing student retention practices at community colleges.

Customized Performance Improvement Model[3]

The **desired state** is informed by who the institution is, what it values, and where it is going as well as critical issues facing the industry and institution and best practices and benchmarks.

The **TOWS matrix** ensures analysis of internal and external factors, informs the desired and actual states, and aids in developing strategies.

The **actual state** includes current retention practices, data collection, analysis, and metrics. It is informed by and includes the strengths and weaknesses of the TOWS matrix.
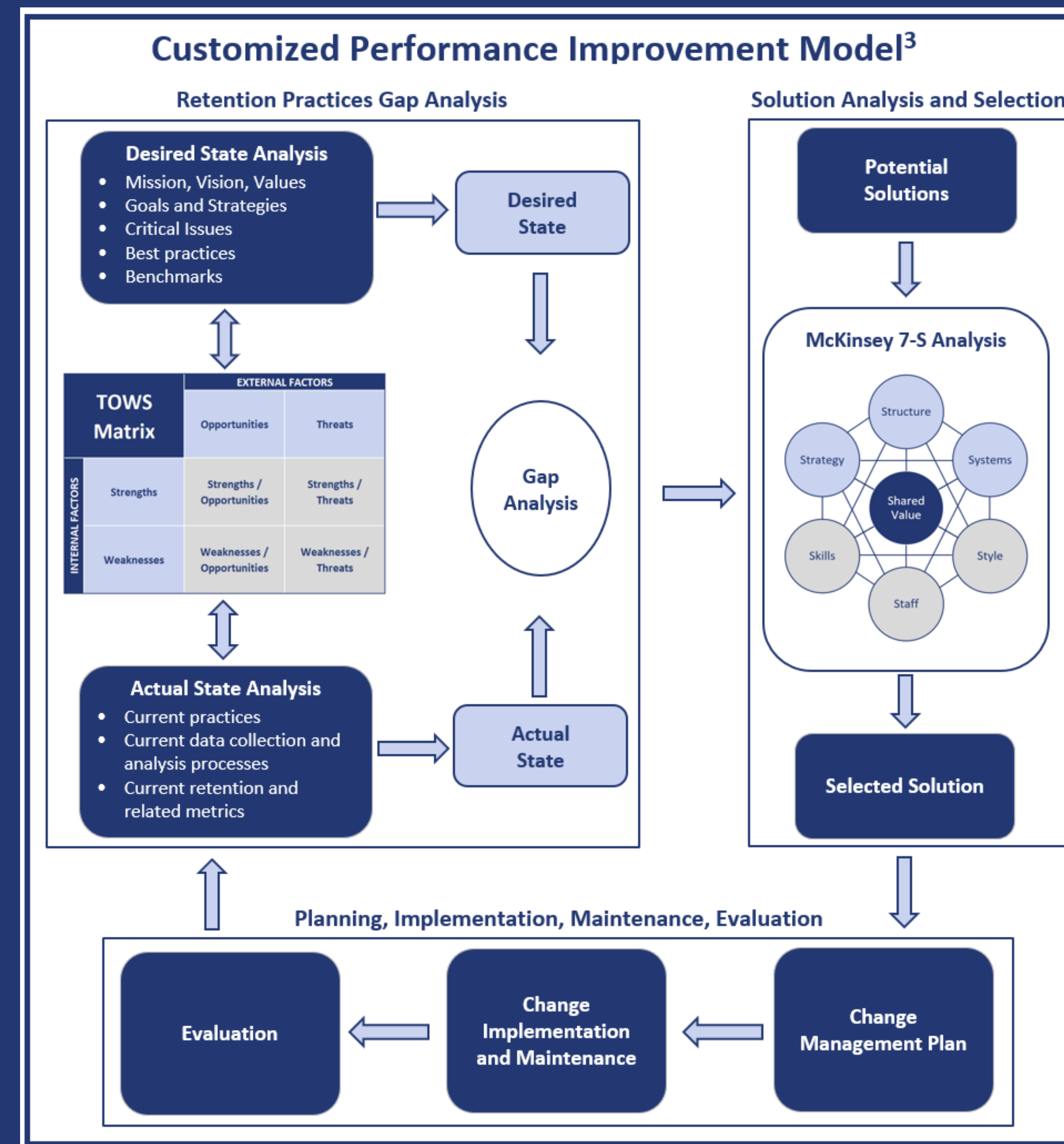
Potential solutions are identified to fill the gaps identified in the gap analysis.

The **McKinsey 7-S framework** facilitates a holistic analysis of potential solutions by determining the extent to which they are aligned with each of the seven elements of the institution.

The researcher identified and recommended the optimal solution based on the preceding analyses. The institution identified the **selected solution** upon review of the potential solutions.

References
1. National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Integrated postsecondary education data system.* https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/
2. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021). *Persistence and retention: Fall 2019 beginning cohort.* https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/PersistenceRetention2021.pdf
3. Van Tiem, D. M., Moseley, J. L., & Dessinger, J. L. (2012). *Fundamentals of performance improvement: Optimizing results through people, processes, and organizations* (3rd ed.). Wiley.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

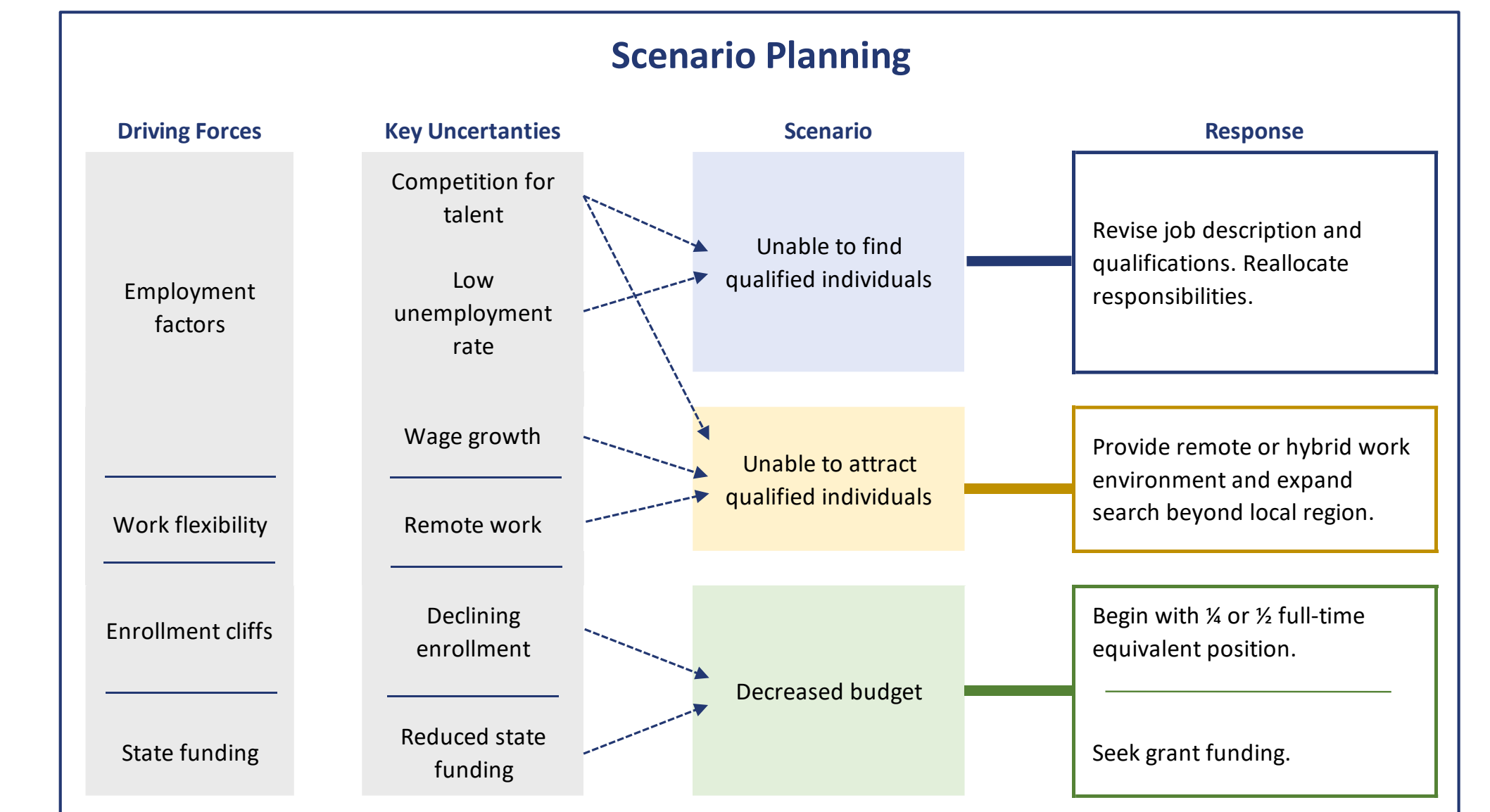A comprehensive change management plan supports the effective implementation of change.

- **Change management team**
- **Strategic vision**

By adding student success staff, the institution can provide more effective retention and intervention measures to improve student outcomes, supporting the institution's mission and long-term success.
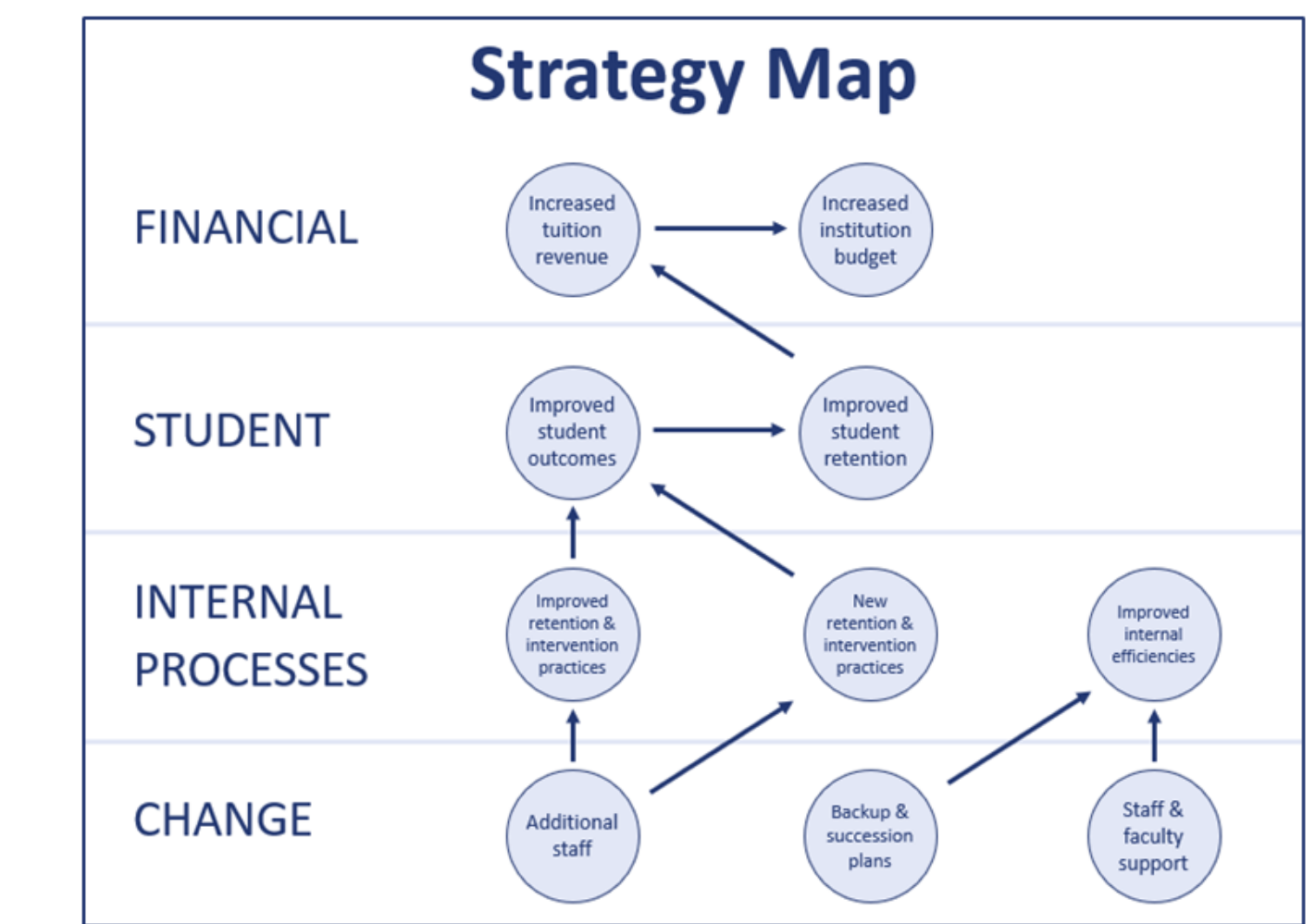
- **Communication plan**
- **Change effectiveness metrics**

Metrics to Measure Change	
Improved student retention	Adherence to timeline
Student satisfaction	Adherence to action plan
Number of retention and intervention practices	Change management team satisfaction
Time to fill position	Employee buy-in
Time to productivity	

- **Reinforcement strategies**
- **Scenario planning**

Scenario Planning

- **Strategy map**

Strategy Map

- **Action plan**

MARBLE STATE ACTION PLAN

Disclaimer: This study used pseudonyms for the name of the Historically Black Community College, the names of the informational interview participants, and the location of the college in recognition that confidentiality and anonymity are paramount in academic consultative research.

IWU | INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY