SOVA

The *Phase 1: Listen & Learn* stakeholder engagement process represented extensive outreach to stakeholders across the CSU system through virtual town halls, listening sessions, and asynchronous feedback platforms. The process focused on gathering broad input to identify critical priorities and challenges.

From November 2024 to February 2025 facilitators took an expansive approach to engagement, reaching thousands of stakeholders through:

- **8 Town Halls** with over 1,750 attendees.
- **13 targeted listening sessions** with key stakeholder groups.
- **More than** 3,200 visitors engaged with the online platform.

The feedback shared was both candid and constructive, signaling clear priorities for where the CSU should focus.

In analyzing the stakeholder feedback, we focused on several critical questions:

- What are the biggest aspirations for the CSU?
- What actions will set us up for success?
- What challenges must the plan address?
- How should the student experience evolve?

Stakeholders identified seven overarching priorities that must be central to the plan:

- **Innovating academic programs and pedagogies** – Stakeholders called for more flexible, accessible learning pathways, including expanded online and hybrid options, competency-based education, and stronger recognition of prior learning to support diverse student needs.

- **Integrating career readiness and workforce preparation** – There is a strong demand for more hands-on, real-world learning opportunities, ensuring every student gains practical skills, industry connections, and a clear path to meaningful employment.

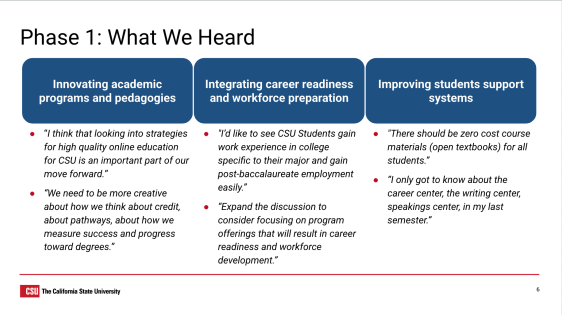
- **Improving student support systems** – Stakeholders stressed the need to reduce financial barriers, expand wraparound student services, and make learning materials more affordable to improve retention and success.

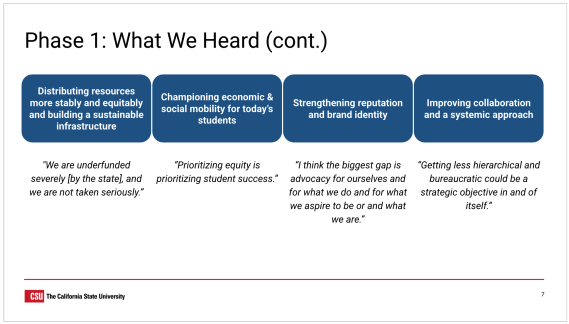
- **Distributing resources more stably and equitably and building a sustainable infrastructure:** Stakeholders emphasized the need for more predictable and equitable funding to reduce disparities across campuses and ensure long-term stability.

- **Championing economic & social mobility for today's students:** We heard loud and clear that CSU must double down on its role as a driver of upward mobility, ensuring every student has access to career-relevant learning and economic opportunity.

- **Strengthening reputation and brand identity:** Stakeholders see a clear gap in CSU's external visibility and want a stronger, more unified identity that reflects the system's excellence and impact.

- **Improving collaboration and a systemic approach:** Many called for better coordination across campuses to reduce bureaucracy, share innovations, and operate as a truly connected system.

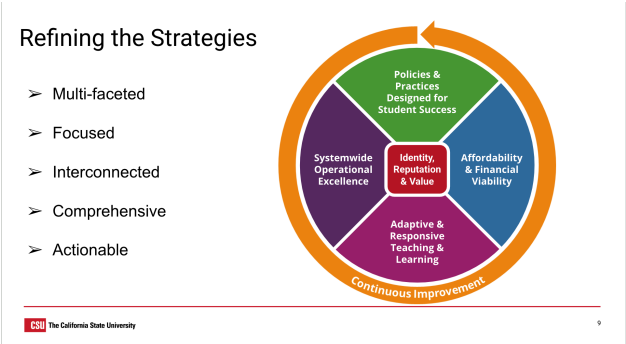




While these seven topics clearly emerged as central priorities for the strategic plan, there was divergence among stakeholders in *how* to pursue these goals. Interactions on the engagement platform revealed some contradictions:

- There was excitement about technology innovation in teaching and learning such as online learning, AI integration, and digital accessibility *and* strong desires for traditional in-person learning. A comment championing deployment of virtual learning received 42 upvotes and 33 downvotes, for example.

- The CSU's role in addressing climate change and environmental sustainability was a divisive topic with related comments receiving 64 upvotes and 30 downvotes.

- Comments emphasizing economic mobility and career development were equal to those hailing the importance of the liberal arts.

The findings from Phase 1 stakeholder engagement will be used to inform and further refine the emerging strategies.