Research & Analytical Services
Qualitative Study
College-Wide SWOT Analysis

Study Dates: July 10, 2018 – Aug. 8, 2018

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South Texas College (STC) strives to fulfill its mission of achieving student success, nurturing talent, and promoting economic vitality through a quality education. STC seeks continual improvement in all facets of the institution—tangible and intangible—to realize this mission. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was conducted to identify and assess internal and external forces impacting the institution; furthermore, the SWOT Analysis will assist in strategic planning.

Overview of Findings

The SWOT Analysis revealed a myriad of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Hence, this report focused on the five categories most cited in each portion. Strengths consisted of STC's affordability, program offerings, faculty/staff, equipment/technology, and student support services while Weaknesses included understaffing, outreach, internal processes, communication, and STC culture. Opportunities emerged in the forms of partnerships, program offerings, funding, student placements, and the dual credit sphere. Competing institutions, negative perceptions, reduction of funding, and labor market trends populated Threats.

Methodology

A SWOT Analysis was conducted with participant feedback gathered from July 10th, 2018 to August 8th, 2018. A researcher facilitated nine feedback sessions with a total of 72 participants. The groups represented each STC division and campus, cultivating a healthy and comprehensive perception of the institution. The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of each individual group's feedback. Then, the researcher compared descriptors across all groups, which resulted in identifying common themes (Please see figures below for a comprehensive list—the surface area for each category bases itself on frequency as expressed by groups, so a larger surface area depicts more feedback on that category and its subcategories).

Strengths

Participants identified 1) affordability, 2) program offerings, 3) faculty and staff, 4) equipment and technology, and 5) student support services as the most prominent Strengths within STC. STC's affordability unequivocally appeared in the responses for its excellent value for an education, low tuition rates, and debt-free status for most students. The wide-ranging certificates and degrees offered at STC featured prominently because of the programs' diversity in degree plans, multiple modalities, and versatility in the job market. Because of their dedication to the students, expertise in their areas, and resourcefulness in their positions, faculty and staff materialized as Strengths. Additionally, the institution boasted cutting-edge equipment and technology in the classrooms for instruction and in its infrastructure for operations. Student support services surfaced as Strengths because of a robust library, sturdy tutoring, and college-wide innovation.

Weaknesses

Participants articulated Weaknesses in 1) understaffing, 2) outreach, 3) internal processes, 4) communication, and 5) STC culture. Understaffing in a multitude of departments emerged as the most distressing Weakness, a Weakness causing latent processes, lack of sufficient support, and a dearth of personnel for large-scale projects. An absence of a public relations office at every campus, a deficiency in program specific marketing, and an unequal

distribution of marketing resources earned outreach the second most noted Weakness. Internal processes, a third Weakness, required modifying for efficiency, updating for new information, and transplanting into digital environments. Communication fossilized as a Weakness due to institutional silos, oversaturation of information, and inconsistent updates to procedural and policy changes. A famine of STC culture in the community and on campus existed because of a scarcity in an active student community, insufficient campus personality (i.e., monuments, traditions, mascot), and a dis-identification from the K-12 setting with STC.

Opportunities

Participants voiced the following Opportunities: 1) partnerships, 2) student placements, 3) funding, 4) labor market trends, and 5) STC culture. Partnerships with 4-year universities, school districts, labor industries, governmental entities, and other community colleges concretized as an Opportunity. Student placements, a second Opportunity, encompassed course placements upon matriculation, apprenticeships and networking during schooling, and job placements post-graduation. Regional labor market trends emerged as an Opportunity due to the influx of industries to the area and increased demand for professionals in health, technology, and technical areas. Re-igniting fruitful relationships with the community, creating internal and external STC traditions, and enhancing visibility of programs at STC prompted STC culture to rise as an Opportunity.

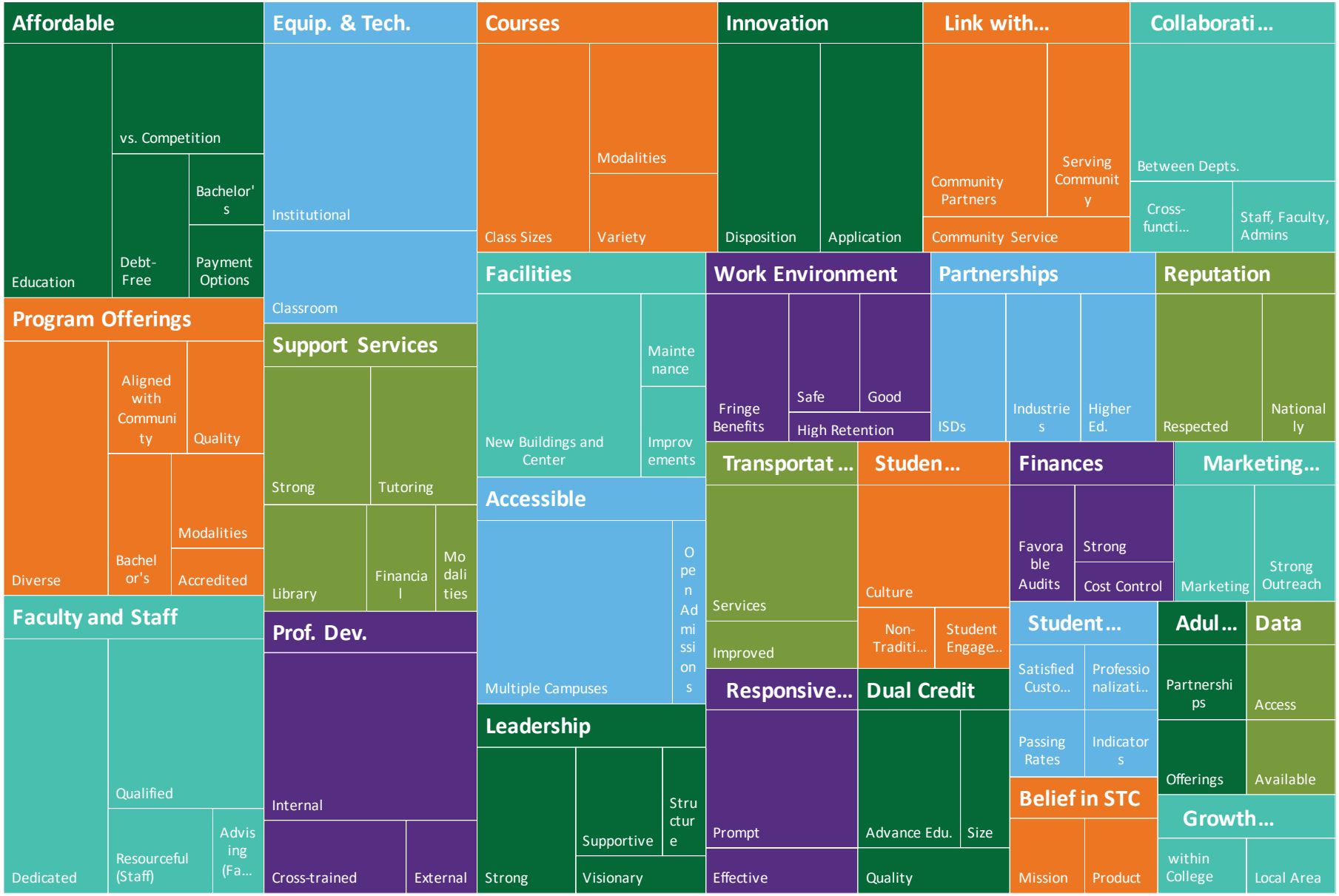
Threats

Threats materialized in the forms of 1) competing institutions, 2) negative perceptions, 3) funding, 4) dual credit issues, and 5) labor market trends. Competing institutions included proprietary institutions, universities, and online schools, entities that may cause student and employee attrition. Negative perceptions surfaced as a Threat because of poor perception toward STC, a general devaluation of higher education, and an image of violence in the region. A reduction of funding posed a Threat at local, state, and federal levels. At state and federal levels, concerns over grants, financial aid, and tax revenue lurked; at a local level, issues with bond fatigue arose. As a Threat, dual credit issues pointed toward its negative impact on STC enrollment, competition from other institutions, and skepticism of the program at the state level. Labor market trends appeared as a Threat because of industries that hire personnel with minimal credentials and a boom in the local economy.

Looking Forward: A Collaborative Portrait

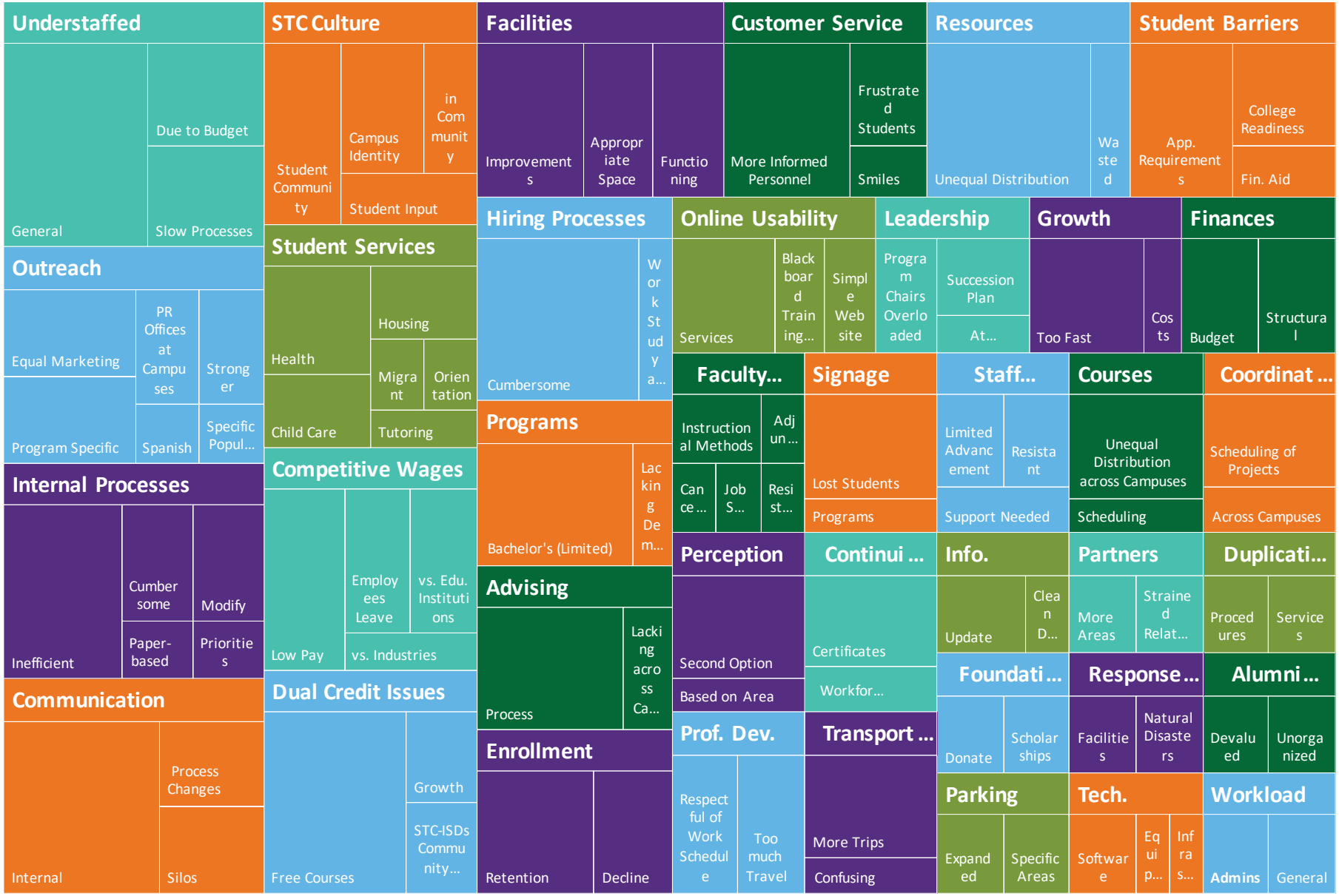
This SWOT Analysis sketched, in broad strokes, perceptions of internal and external forces impacting the institution as a whole—in a sense, a collaborative portrait of STC. With students, employees, and the community serving as an audience, STC, much like an artist, has the opportunity and obligation to assess its portrait, paint over faulty brush strokes, and incorporate new but essential colors.

Strengths



The surface area for categories bases itself on the frequency as expressed by groups, so a larger surface area depicts more feedback on that category and its subcategories.

Weaknesses



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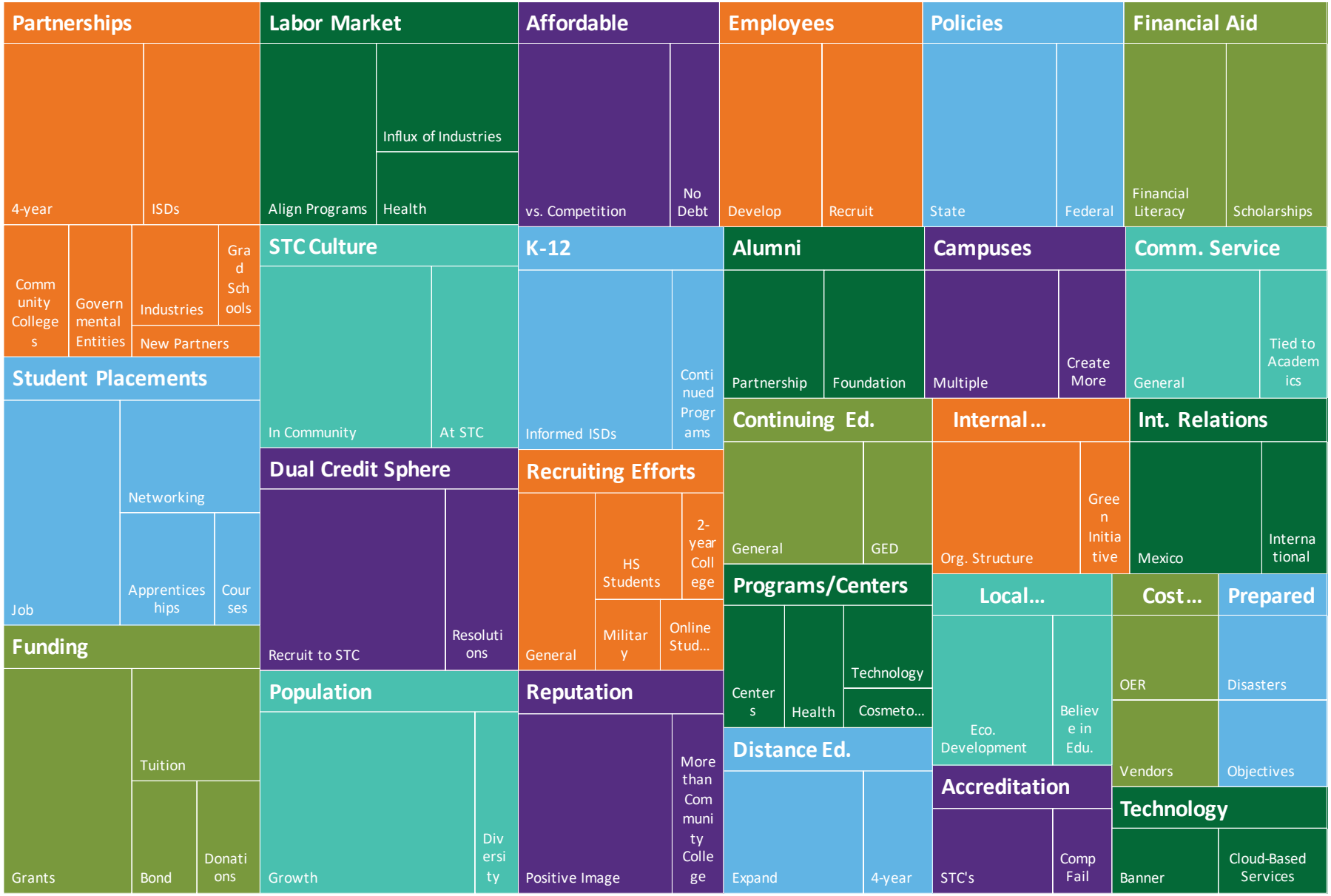
Opportunities



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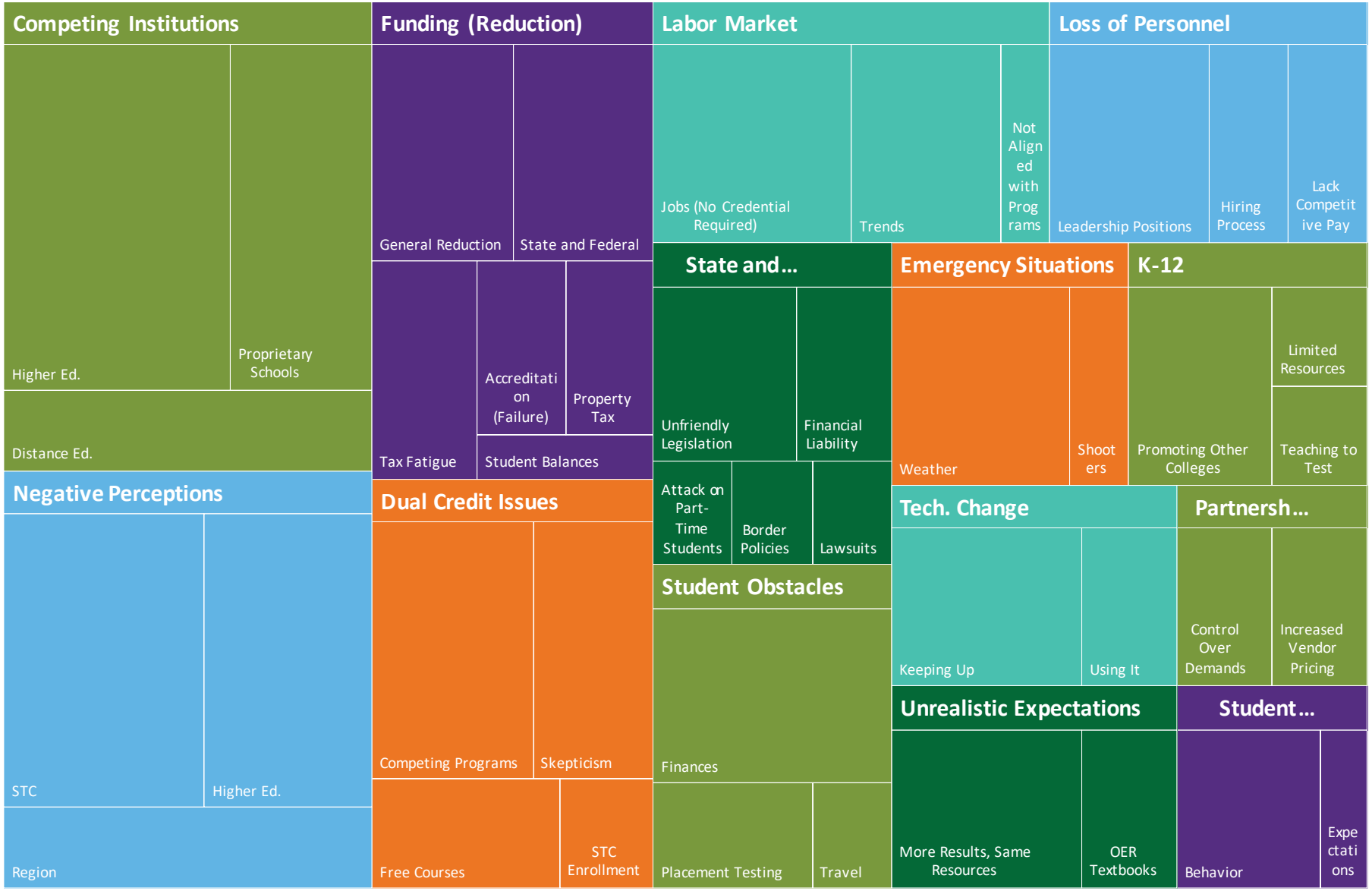
Threats



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