**Project SYNCERE Overview**

**ORGANIZATION**

Project SYNCERE (PS) provides students with year-round opportunities to become engaged in STEM through its innovative project-based learning curriculum. PS works directly with school districts, local universities, and community organizations to deliver engineering-focused programs.

These opportunities have actively increased the number of under-represented students who have become engaged in the STEM fields. Through their program implementation, PS is helping to move the needle in changing the face of engineering.

**MISSION**

Project SYNCERE prepares the minds of underrepresented students and creates pathways for them to pursue careers in STEM.

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

**Long-Term Impact**

Increase the number of underserved and underrepresented students pursuing careers in the STEM fields

**Mid-Term Outcome**

Increase access to opportunities in STEM, particularly in engineering

**Short Term Outcome**

- Create a pathway for students to access opportunities in STEM
- Create a vision of being successful in a STEM career
- Build STEM skills including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills
- Increase self-confidence to excel in STEM fields
- Build engineering knowledge, skills, and practices
- Increase family understanding and support of students in STEM
Organizational Outlook

The societal, economic, health, and education changes that will affect PS over the next 3 years

- The changing way that people interact socially (ex, social distancing)
- Increased attention on and desire to invest in the Black community
- More virtual options and less hands-on delivery (less facilitated exposure)
- Less access to STEM-related physical spaces
- Loss of funding due to the economic hardship of sponsors and donors
- Increased interest from businesses and donors in addressing health and income disparities
- There is more appreciation for how reliant our world is on engineers; PS may be better positioned to enter new markets
- Potential increased student access to technology as schools adapt to learning from home.
- Decision-making in school districts is changing
- Society is encouraging and supporting more diverse entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Increased hurdles when working with school-based programming
- Frequent changes to health regulations have to be monitored closely and school/district-specific requirements must be understood
- The legal landscape is still being defined and there may implications for starting up in person
- School district operating schedules may be erratic
- CPS now has other priorities (re-opening schools, more effective virtual learning, etc.) and may be less focused on after school or supplemental programming
- More families are impacted financially by the loss of jobs and income during COVID and may cause CPS to invest in internet service/access for families over the next academic year
- There is a widening digital divide that is causing many students to have stalled academic advancement – this may result in changing models and a refocus on core skills instead of STEM
- The current US Government has deprioritized science
## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Long established relationships with donors</td>
<td>● Capacity and bandwidth limited by a small staff</td>
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<td>● Strong reputation for hands-on engineering learning</td>
<td>● Financial reserves</td>
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<td>● A strong team that is dedicated to the mission</td>
<td>● Limited Individual donor base</td>
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<td>● A strong relationship with CPS</td>
<td>● Strategic planning for better positioning</td>
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<td>● Diversified funding sources</td>
<td>● Lack of accountability, metrics, tracking, and reporting</td>
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<td>● Growth and development of Board members</td>
<td>● Lack of sustainable community involvement</td>
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<td>● Consistent volunteer base</td>
<td>● Instructor recruitment</td>
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<td>● Strong programming including Project Lead The Way</td>
<td>● Lack of PR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Pace, prioritization and goals alignment</td>
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<td>● Lack of consistent legal counsel</td>
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<td>● Lack of a succession plan</td>
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<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
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<td>● Take advantage of the increased focus on Black Lives Matter</td>
<td>● Dwindling available funding sources</td>
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<td>● Virtual expansion to reach more students in different regions</td>
<td>● Increased competition due to new local entrants and virtual opportunities</td>
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<td>● Enhance the reputation and awareness beyond Chicago</td>
<td>● Reduced interest in STEM because of difficulty and now having to it virtually</td>
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<td>● Expand the team (outsource, contracting, alumni, volunteers)</td>
<td>● Decreased face to face interactions that impact relationship building</td>
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<td>● Increase work with Associate Board</td>
<td>● Access to technology for low-income communities</td>
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<td>● Maximize fundraising and partnership connections</td>
<td>● Access to resources</td>
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<td>● Partner with organizations to provide internships or capstone projects, career or college development +</td>
<td>● Staff retention due to increased virtual opportunities</td>
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<td>● Increased press (TV, Radio, Print, Journals, Magazines)</td>
<td>● Budget justification to funders</td>
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<td>● PLTW Curriculum - utilizing more of the PLTW benefits</td>
<td>● Uncertainty in Out-of-School-Time opportunities</td>
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<td>● Position PS to be an asset to companies, not just a charity (ex., be a pipeline of diverse talent)</td>
<td>● Evolving liaisons at established partners</td>
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<td>● Expand relationships with national, state, and local government</td>
<td>● Don't have strong political ties</td>
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<td>● Partner with universities to plug into additional resources</td>
<td>● Mass exodus of young black families leaving IL which drives less school funding</td>
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<td>● Less student involvement due to the frustrations of the virtual environment (ex., families not being able to dedicate the time shared devices in-home)</td>
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Highlighted Opportunities and Threats were voted to be the most critical to address.
FY 2021-2023 Three Year Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Project SYNCERE's staff capacity and organizational structure will evolve to support our long-term goals

1-1: Project SYNCERE will expand staff resources to develop and manage community and business partner engagement strategies
   ● Due Date: August 31, 2022
   ● KPIs: Hiring of a Community Partnership Manager and a Volunteer Manager

1-2: Project SYNCERE staff and board will evolve our services to strengthen our contributions along the students’ career path
   ● Due Date: August 31, 2023
   ● KPIs: Partnerships/services established to provide services in the following categories:
     o High School Selection Support
     o College Selection/Access
     o Community College Pre-Credit
     o Internships
     o Scholarships vcn
     o STEM Career Coaching
     o Mentorship
     o Peer Networking

1-3: Project SYNCERE will strengthen its operations to spur growth towards our long-term goals (ex., a knowledge management process).
   ● Due Date: January 1, 2022
   ● KPIs: Educational Module Effectiveness (PS will have fully defined program models with documented inputs and expected outputs. Documented research and practices to support program models.)

1-4: Project SYNCERE will establish an organization that is agile and flexible to adapt to growth and changes in service delivery.
   ● Due Date: December 31, 2021
   ● KPIs: Flexible staffing plans created, staff onboarding flow time, attrition rates

1-5: Project SYNCERE will establish data analytics strategies to measure long-term success of Project SYNCERE students from secondary education through early career.
   ● Due Date: July 1, 2022
KPIs: Project SYNCERE will create an alumni engagement strategy to enable us to track students through an early career
- KPI: Establish tracking and analytics tools with key metrics

Goal #2: Project SYNCERE will reach $2.5 million in annual funding (excluding the tech hub operations)

2-1: Project SYNCERE will develop cohesive and compelling messaging to support new funder and individual donor campaigns.
- Due Date: August 31, 2022
- KPIs: Creation of an updated pitch deck, annual report and other critical marketing material to improve messaging to new donor/sponsor mix

2-2: Project SYNCERE will create and implement a strategy for strengthening and deepening sponsor relationships through structured engagement opportunities.
- Due Date: August 31, 2022
- KPIs: # of sponsors with engagement activities, # of available engagement opportunities, a strategy created

2-3: Project SYNCERE will be positioned as an asset to corporate partners, providing business value along with philanthropic benefit.
- Due Date: August 31, 2022
- KPIs: Positioning plan created; the number of corporate sponsors who leverage PS to deliver programs for their special STEM Outreach events; quality of pitch deck to highlight this service model of PS

2-4: Project SYNCERE will hold annual fundraising campaigns that move us toward our annual funding goal.
- Due Date: Each Year
- KPIs: 2021 fundraising goal, 2022 fundraising goal, 2023 fundraising goal

Goal #3: Project SYNCERE will establish a Technology Hub in Chicago

3-1: Project SYNCERE will define a Technology Hub service model that expands organizational capability and supports deeper community engagement.
- Due Date: January 1, 2022
- KPIs: Service model designed and approved, business case reviewed and approved
3-2: Project SYNCERE will create a funding model and initiate a fundraising plan for the buildout and operations of the Technology Hub.

- Due Date: September 1, 2022
- KPIs: Budget created, funding strategy created, revenue raised per donor

3-3: Project SYNCERE will create a comprehensive implementation plan to launch the Technology Hub while minimizing disruption to core operations. The plan will include staffing and organizational design, establishing key partnerships, and change management.

- Due Date: December 31, 2022
- KPIs: Implementation Plan developed, % of Key Milestones delivered on time