The feasibility study respondents indicated that Southwest is essential to the educational and economic vitality of the Greater Memphis community. The following summary of findings demonstrate that a significant majority of interviewees believe Southwest is worthy of private-sector support:

- **86%** of the responding interviewees are favorable toward Southwest
- **91%** of the responding interviewees indicate they would or might personally contribute to a major gifts campaign conducted on behalf of Southwest
- **85%** of the external respondents place the needs of Southwest as either high or medium compared to their other philanthropic priorities

The majority of the respondents are in favor of conducting a major gifts campaign on behalf of Southwest and believe that an awareness campaign must be launched prior to the major gifts campaign.

**SUMMARY**

Southwest Tennessee Community College is dedicated to increasing educational access and promoting workforce development in the Shelby and Fayette County communities. Consequently, Southwest’s Foundation’s board of directors has authorized the College to commence a Major Gifts Campaign that will provide the financial support necessary to ensure Southwest’s future responsiveness and effectiveness in meeting community needs.

“The Clements Group is recommending that Southwest Tennessee Community College immediately begin preparations to launch a major gifts campaign.”

—Clements Group Feasibility Study
Southwest Tennessee Community College (Southwest) formed July 1, 2000, by the consolidation of State Technical Institute at Memphis (founded in 1967) and Shelby State Community College (founded in 1970), offers the rich resources and recognized quality of 60 collective years of educational excellence – the legacy of its founding institutions. Southwest is the largest community college in the State of Tennessee, offering transfer degrees, technical degrees, and certificates in more than 100 business, information technology, engineering technology, allied health, arts and sciences fields. The College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. As both a partner and leader in building opportunities for success in the greater Memphis community, the College returns exceptional value to its service area not only through educational and developmental benefits to its students, but also through its economic, cultural, and civic impact on the community.

The Feasibility Study

The Southwest Tennessee Community College Foundation contracted the Clements Group, a firm specializing in two-year college fund-raising programs, to implement the feasibility study in April 2002. The Clements Group consultants conducted 83 interviews with members of the Southwest Foundation Board and other influential community leaders. Interviews were also conducted with the Southwest administration, faculty and staff.

The purpose of the feasibility study was to provide the resource information, preliminary cultivation of prospects, and recommendations necessary to prepare and implement a major gifts campaign.

The information obtained concerned four essential requirements for success:

1. program appeal
2. availability of financial support
3. leadership
4. organization

Challenges

As a result of these interviews, four major challenges were identified by study participants:

- Enhancing community awareness of Southwest’s mission, success stories, and establishing the College as a “first choice” educational resource
- Locating additional sources of funding
- Continuing to fulfill its mission of responding to the needs of the students and the community at large
- Enhancing internal communication and cohesiveness

Recommendations

The Clements Group consultants gleaned significant insight and direction from the feasibility study. The strength and validation of the following recommendations come from the feasibility study findings, the responses of the interviewees, and current research on post-secondary education.

Major Gifts Campaign Goal

Based on the positive findings of the feasibility study, the Clements Group recommends that Southwest initiate a major gifts campaign with a targeted goal of $12 to $14 million in cash and pledges over five years. This goal is considered feasible by informed opinion leaders in the area served by Southwest, and it is large enough to attract leaders of stature, but reasonable enough to garner widespread support.

Major Gifts Campaign Timing

Feasibility study participants had valuable insight about the timing of the major gifts campaign. Many were aware of other, ongoing fund-raising campaigns in the College’s service area, noting that these might present challenges to a campaign on behalf of Southwest. A number of respondents cited concern about the current uncertainty in the stock market. Respondents believed a major gifts campaign will receive increased community support if Southwest conducts internal and external awareness programs before beginning its solicitation.

Major Gifts Campaign Initiatives

The feasibility study participants recommended that the following four initiatives be given priority in the Major Gifts Campaign.

Initiative 1

Nursing and Biotechnology Facility

Southwest’s Allied Health Programs provide employers with educated and trained health care workers. In Memphis and Shelby County, the nurse vacancy rate is estimated to be approximately 35 percent. The Southwest Department of Nursing is currently located in antiquated facilities (former maintenance building) that include two loading docks. In partnership with area health care and research organizations, funds would be used to establish a new facility that would house both the Nursing School and the newly proposed Biotechnology Technician degree program. Biotechnology is a rapidly growing industry in Memphis and a newly trained skilled workforce will be needed. In addition to nurses, the new facility will allow Southwest to recruit students in such high-demand areas as Laboratory Technicians, Process Development Technicians, and Research Technicians in the field of biotechnology.

Initiative 2

Technology Needs

Southwest Tennessee Community College is seeking to improve its electronic infrastructure. Enhancements and additions to the College’s network and computing resources will enable improved access to the College’s academic programs and administrative services.

Initiative 3

Student Scholarship Endowment

Southwest Tennessee Community College would establish a substantial scholarship fund to ensure that a college education is financially possible for students in need. The endowment will assist in increasing the educational level of our region and impact the economic development of our community.

Initiative 4

Faculty and Staff Professional Development Endowment

Southwest Tennessee Community College would establish a fund to provide on-going professional development that will strengthen the effectiveness of staff and enable faculty to better prepare students for the future job market.