

THE PROCESS OF PLANNING

PLANNING

- 1) Strategic planning positions the university for the future and sets its long-term direction. It identifies and assesses the institution's relevant strategic advantage and sets the state for the development of the institutional operational plan and funding priorities.
- 2) The operational plan contains the action plans developed by campus units to move the strategic plan forward. It includes the objectives, action plans, and resource requirements needed to achieve the strategic results.
- 3) The planning process is an on-going, campus-wide activity.
- 4) Strategic planning is a continual process that aligns the institution with its internal and external environments. It helps answer the following three questions: 1) Where are we now? 2) Where are we going? And 3) How do we best get there? Additionally, part of the strategic planning process assesses how well an institution is accomplishing its mission.
- 5) There are many reasons why colleges and universities need to do strategic planning. In *Campus Trends 1996*, the American Council on Education (ACE) identifies aligning programs with priorities as one of the significant changes of the last decade. ACE states that "a constrained financial climate combined with expanding student needs has forced campus leaders to make hard decisions." Institutions of higher education can only support programs that are consistent with funding prospects and long-term priorities. They can no longer be all things to all people.
- 6) Additionally, a focus on accountability necessitates strategic planning. A chain reaction that began with business and industry "cleaning house" and downsizing large bureaucracies led to the public asking the same thing of government who in turn is asking the same of colleges and universities. In fact for higher education, accountability runs two ways. First, the government is holding institutions accountable for funds allocated to them. Second, the public also realizes that the cost of tuition has gradually risen. People want to know they are receiving the most value for their money.
- 7) As faculty, staff, and administrators contemplate strategic planning at their institutions as a proactive way to deal with change, there are certain points to be considered. In their book, *Strategic Change in Colleges and Universities*, Daniel Rowley, Herman Lujan, and Michael Dolence articulate the following:

- ⊗ In response to today's complex and diverse society, strategic planning seeks an approach to management that is more extensive and broad than traditional planning.
- ⊗ Successful strategic planning involves campus-wide participation.
- ⊗ Each campus has its own individual characteristics and needs and must develop a method of planning that will work for it. No one model will work for all organizations.
- ⊗ Strategic planning is an iterative, learning process.
- ⊗ Strategic planning is a continual process. Institutions must continually collect information about its internal and external environments.
- ⊗ Assessment must be an integral part of the process.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The systematic comparison of institutional performance to institutional purpose evaluates institutional effectiveness. The four constituent elements of determining institutional effectiveness are strategic planning, operational planning, assessment, and improvement of planning, operations, and budgeting.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Institutional research must be an integral part of the institution's planning and evaluation process.

It should include the following activities:

- ongoing timely data collection
- analysis and dissemination
- use of external studies and reports
- design and implementation of internal studies related to:
 - students,
 - personnel,
 - facilities,
 - equipment,
 - programs,
 - services,
 - fiscal resources,
 - development of data bases, and
 - other related activities in support of planning, evaluation, and management.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 1) **Deals with the futurity of current decisions. Looks at the chain of cause and effect consequences over time of an actual or intended decision and at alternative courses of action.**

“The essence of formal strategic planning is the systematic identification of opportunities and threats that lie in the future, which in combination with other relevant data provide a basis for an organization’s making better current decisions to exploit the opportunities and to avoid the threats.

Planning means designing a desired future and identifying ways to bring it about.”

George A. Steiner, 1979

- 2) **Is a process that begins with the setting of organizational aims, defines strategies and policies to achieve them, and develops detailed plans to make sure that the strategies are implemented so as to achieve the ends sought. Has timelines but is continuous.**
- 3) **Necessitates dedication to acting on the basis of contemplation of the future, a determination to plan constantly and systematically as an integral part of management.**
- 4) **Links to annual budgets and operating plans.**
- 5) **Is a systems approach to maneuvering an organization over time through the uncertainties of its changing environment to achieve prescribed aims.**