

CORE COMPONENT 2D

All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Introduction

In the introduction to this criterion is a detailed description of the Strategic Planning process. This process, which repeats itself every three to five years, begins with a review of the mission of the College. After the mission is reviewed, a vision for the strategic plan is developed, and all major initiatives, strategies, and action plans are based on that vision.

Likewise, the departmental planning for the academic areas of the College begins with the mission, and the nine Institutional Goals and Objectives which were derived directly from the mission. Every department is expected to undergo this review every five years.

The beginning of the departmental review process includes a review of the department plans to ensure that they are in alignment with the Institutional Goals and Objectives. Since the Campus Master Planning process was initiated from the strategic plan, it is, necessarily, aligned with the mission, which drives the strategic plan. As administrative departments develop plans they need to be based directly off the strategic plan so that they, too, will align with the mission of the organization.

Finding 2d.1: The strategic planning processes allow for reprioritization of goals when necessary because of changing environments.

The mission of any organization succinctly states what the organization is all about. Strategic plans are built from a vision that is in keeping with the mission. While the mission rarely changes, the vision for any given plan has its own unique focus on where the leader of the organization wants the organization to be at the completion of the planning cycle. This vision will be modified as external factors such as the economy and competitive situations exert their pressure and as internal strengths or weaknesses vary from plan to plan based on personnel and past successes or failures.

In order for any organization to be future-oriented, it must step back periodically and reassess its location and movement relative to the mission. It must establish realistic plans based on a vision that will give it a better chance of continuing to fulfill its mission.

The strategic planning cycle under the auspices of the New Millennium Commission is designed around a three to five year cycle (as illustrated in Figure 2.2 in the introduction to this criterion). Figure 2d.1 shows the flow of this planning process. As each new cycle is started we first review the Mission of the College, then we develop

a vision for this particular plan. At the same time a SWOT analysis is performed to identify both internal as well as external influences on the success of the plan and the College as a whole.

Based on the SWOT analysis and the current vision, a number of major (strategic) initiatives are developed with accompanying strategies and action plans (including success measures for later assessment). These strategies and action plans, as well as the strategic initiatives themselves are clearly influenced by changing environments. Through this structure, we are able to respond to the changing environments in a methodical, constructive manner.

There is an annual review cycle built into our strategic planning process. In the spring of each year we review our progress against the action plans based on the measures that were established the year previous. Based on the progress made, or not made, and possible environmental changes, revised action plans with appropriate assessment measures are developed for implementation the ensuing year.

Examples of how this has actually worked include most notably the addition of two new strategic initiatives in the second cycle of the NMC process. After focusing on only four major goals from '00 until '03, the SWOT analysis made it plain that we needed to take account of several changing factors in our environment. Our market was becoming more and more regionalized, the economy made us compete more directly with community colleges, and the state of Illinois was experiencing a dramatic teacher shortage. Given these environmental factors, two significant additions to our strategic plan were made: a focus on partnerships (especially with community colleges), and a commitment to become a premier provider of teacher certification in our area.

Finding 2d.2: Implementation of Greenville College's planning is evident in its operations.

There are many areas of the strategic plan which directly impact the operational performance of the College. Consider the following three or four examples:

In the NMC 2000 strategic plan, one of the major Goals was to enhance the focus on Liberal Arts at the College. The strategies for accomplishing this goal included the implementation of a new General Education curriculum for the first time in thirty years. The focus of this change was the introduction of a COR curriculum. Four required courses all focused on the theme of teaching our students an "integrative" approach to real world problem solving that fits our mission to prepare them for lives of service. These courses include:

- COR 101: Cornerstone Seminar: Foundations in the Liberal Arts Tradition and COR 102 Introduction to Christian Thought and Life (first year students),
- COR 201 (2nd year students) later replaced by COR 302: Science and Christianity, and:
- COR 401: Capstone Seminar: Advanced Integrative Studies (4th year students).

Figure 2d.1:
Strategic Planning Cycle



As a direct result of these being on our strategic plan, the COR 101-102 courses were implemented in school year 2000-2001, COR 201 was pilot tested in 2000-2001 with full implementation in school year 2001-2002 (later replaced by COR 302), and COR 401 was pilot tested during Interterm of 2001 and 2002 and fully implemented in the 2002-2003 school year. Further changes are scheduled for COR 401 and the rest of the curriculum is constantly reviewed by the General Education Council.

In further fulfillment of this same goal the general education revision also included a "cross-cultural requirement." As part of our commitment to a "seamless" curriculum and co-curriculum, one action plan was to develop "Urban Plunge" experiences as part of the Greenville College education. By the fall of 2003 approximately 15% of the student body was participating in this program.

Another action plan for this goal was to provide off-campus cross-cultural experiences. An Urban Center and Africa Semester program were developed. (They were suspended last year due to personnel changes and political instability in Africa). Yet another action plan for this goal was to incorporate leadership courses into the curriculum. As of the spring of 2003, two one-credit courses were offered in the curriculum while two additional courses were developed, with the proposal to take them to UAAC through the religion department. Currently the plan is to have a one-hour course offered each semester.

This finding is also evident in our refocusing on partnerships and on teacher certification. The rapid growth of two masters degree programs in education and the undergraduate teacher education partnership (UTEP), offered primarily on the campuses of regional community colleges, is another example of how strategic planning has directly affected operations.

The NMC goal to strengthen fiscal vitality, an initiative that has survived into the second NMC cycle, has led directly to significantly improved financial systems across the college, from more accurate and timely cost center reporting to scrupulous attention to cash flow, bad student debt, and monitoring of net revenue.

Finding 2d.3: Coordinated planning processes center on the mission documents that define vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities for the organization.

At the beginning of each major NMC cycle the process is launched with a review of the mission statement of the College. Although the mission has remained virtually unchanged since the College began, as each new administration takes over it is incumbent on them to ensure that the mission statement is expressed in a manner that clearly identifies what their specific implementation of the mission will be. The current mission statement of the College is remarkably well known and embraced by our community:

Mission Statement

Greenville College transforms students for lives of character and service through a Christ-centered education in the liberating arts and sciences.

With this mission in mind the three to five-year vision was established (as described in the introduction to this criterion). The vision identifies where Greenville College wants to be at the end of the current strategic plan. The strategic initiatives were derived directly from the vision of the plan.

As Criterion 1, Core Components 1a and 1e report, the mission exerts influence over regular curricular planning. The institutional goals and objectives contain the necessary elements students must know to promote character development and understand the context of a life based on service.

Finding 2d.4: Budgeting and planning processes involve internal constituents and, where appropriate, external constituents.

Developing an annual budget and strategic plan at the top of an organization without participation from those who will implement the plan often produces a plan with tunnel vision and seldom receives the acceptance and buy-in from those who, alone, can ensure the success of that plan. Likewise a plan that is developed as a grass roots effort often lacks singular vision or the coherence that is necessary to steer an organization through the troubled waters that will inevitably come.

ANNUAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The annual budget is designed to comply with Board of Trustees policy and is vetted by a budget committee with faculty representation and administrators from the major functional areas of the College. Board policy leaves the President considerable latitude in shaping it. Initial budget parameters are gathered in the fall. New funding needs are solicited and gathered by the Vice President for Finance. Early in the spring semester, the committee reconvenes to review new spending needs and changes to compulsory items such as health insurance and energy costs. Each member of the budget committee then drafts budget changes. The individual ideas are reviewed by the committee and areas of agreement and debate emerge. The President and his Cabinet then take these ideas from the committee for further discussion and the President completes the budget. It is presented to the Board at their May meeting and readied for implementation at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1st. A public report on how this budget has worked out is given by the V.P. for Finance to all faculty and staff in October. The report for this current year can be seen on the web.

WEB RESOURCE:

www.greenville.edu/publications/mannoiatexts/FinancialPresentation_Fall05.htm

As noted in Core Component 2c, Trustee policy, advice from consultants and additional planning has been used to set pricing and expenses such as financial aid for this year's budget and the results are promising. Appendix 2d contains a copy of the current budget.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The current cycle of the strategic plan that has been developed by the New Millennium Commission at Greenville College was initiated from the top of the organization with a vision developed by the President and his cabinet. From the vision six major initiatives were identified. These were then presented to the entire campus for review and comment. All the comments were collected and documented. We then selected six teams, one for each major initiative, consisting of from five to 11 members each to identify the strategies that would best satisfy each initiative. These teams were made up of a cross section of the campus community. Faculty membership was a key element of each team with significant representation on all teams. Remaining team members were chosen from staff and administrative staff, cabinet members, and members of our Board of Trustees. These teams provided a list of three to five strategies for each of the major initiatives along with suggestions for action plans that could be implemented to accomplish the strategies.

Participation by a cross section of the campus produced a strategic plan that was more readily accepted by the entire campus. More importantly, however, is the fact that the strategies came from the very people who are responsible for carrying out the strategies. This ownership of the strategies better enables us to accomplish the goals of the plan than strategies which might have been developed from the top of the organization and "forced upon" those who have to carry them out.

Finding 2d.5: A more intentional link between planning and the budgeting process needs to be implemented.

When the second cycle of the New Millennium Commission began in 2003, specific attention was given to reworking the timeline of the process so that it could reasonably feed into the budgetary process. Since our budgetary process begins in early fall each year, we reworked the NMC timeline to have all the strategies and action plans completed before the summer break. When the budgetary process commences in September and October we are able to make informed decisions regarding where to invest new budgetary funding.

Currently there are two fundamental issues preventing a smooth implementation of this process. The first is the fact that the strategic plan focuses primarily on new strategic initiatives and includes little focus on operational issues. The second is the fact that planning at Greenville College currently exists only for administrative departments in terms of annual goals made by members of the President's Cabinet and departmental reviews in the academic areas of the College. Since this strategic plan is the only instrument formally used for the budgeting process, it is of less assistance in a year such as FY 04-05 where there is a financial downturn. Not only is there no money for new initiatives, but cuts need to be made in departmental areas. Ideally a strategic plan should help prioritize budget cuts as well as budget increases. In our case, often the strong relational focus of the community can "trump"

strategic considerations. For example, faculty positions may be left unfilled in strategic areas that have become vacant through natural attrition, rather than hiring for those positions and releasing faculty in strategically less important areas.

This was clearly brought to light at the beginning of the 2004-2005 academic year when we had lower than expected student enrollment, causing us to make reductions in our annual budget. The strategic plan was not specifically used in this decision making process for the reasons stated above. This is not to say that the strategic plan was useless, for it allowed us to continue to focus on the need to maintain development of Adult and Graduate Studies programs which provide increased enrollment through new programs. It also allowed us to recognize the need to continue to strengthen our education program through restructuring and partnerships. Finally, it reminded us of our commitment to increase enrollment, thereby “protecting” the Enrollment management area from reductions. The cuts were difficult indeed, but there was a clear understanding of what was important to us even in the midst of that painful and difficult process.

Summary

Various types of planning take place at Greenville College. The top of the planning tree is the strategic plan developed by the New Millennium Commission. This plan is firmly based on the mission of the College, and it establishes a vision for the entire college for a three to five-year time frame.

Academic departmental planning which occurs through the departmental/program reviews is also based firmly on the mission as well as the nine Institutional Goals and Objectives for a Greenville College Education.

The Campus Master Plan is derived from the strategic plan and is focused by the mission of the College. In the future, a more direct connection between the Master Planning process and the Strategic Planning process would benefit both plans.

Finally, the individual annual goals of the President’s Cabinet are tied back to the major initiatives and strategies of the strategic plan and are, therefore, based on the mission of the College.

Though there are some improvements that need to be made to planning at all levels of the College, there has been dramatic improvement in all the planning processes in the past ten years with strong indications that these improvements will continue in the future.

Annual review and revisions to the New Millennium Commission 2003 plan is underway this spring 2006, providing a new opportunity for improved coordination across these areas. Furthermore, with the successful completion last December of our comprehensive campaign, “Transforming Lives, Shaping the Future,” plans are already underway for a new campaign.

Areas for Improvement

Each of the major planning functions — annual budgeting, strategic planning, campus master planning, and departmental planning — clearly operates with the College’s mission in mind. However, as finding 2d.5 indicates, the calendars of these functions are not currently in close alignment. This spring, significant surpluses are allowing us to revisit our budget plans for next year, and bring the NMC initiatives to bear. But in general this process should begin in the fall instead. Improved communication and timing between internal and external groups across these areas is needed to exchange ideas and ready initiatives that complement each other.