

Fordham University

**Continuous Strategic Planning Guidelines for
Local Academic and Administrative Units**

INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2016 Fordham initiated a 3-year project to develop a Continuous University Strategic Planning process that would guide the University in the years ahead. We are entering the second year of the project when the focus will be on local planning by academic and administrative units. This document offers a set of principles and guidelines for that work.

During the “foundational” 2015-2016 academic year, Fordham (a) completed a Strategic Framework setting high-level University priorities and goals and (b) articulated principles to guide local strategic planning among the academic and administrative units. In Year Two (2016-2017), the local planning units will undertake focused strategic planning processes to delineate their goals and specify the initiatives they will undertake to accomplish them—all guided by and aligned with the University-wide Strategic Framework. Year Two will also begin a transition to a new approach to planning and budgeting process, which by year three will fully integrate local and University-level strategic planning, and align resource allocation with institutional priorities.

The guidelines in this document are provided as suggestions for the local units rather than rules or a detailed playbook. They are drawn from planning practices among a wide variety of higher education entities—from small academic and administrative departments to university systems comprising numerous institutions. Hence, they are generalizations that should be examined by the local planning units and tailored to fit their individual needs and cultures.

Some of Fordham’s academic and administrative units have undertaken strategic planning regularly in past years; others are new to it. Some have recently prepared strategic plans, others have plans completed several years ago that could use refreshing, while others are beginning this process with a blank slate. As a result, not all of the steps and suggestions outlined below will be relevant to every unit at Fordham. Units should feel free to pick and choose as they see fit.

Whatever planning process a local unit employs, the characteristics of effective local planning outlined in Appendix I should be examined as important “core principles.” As such they serve as a touchstone to which local units should refer, whether they are creating a planning process for the first time or reengaging in one that has served them well in the past. These principles describe characteristics of the distinctive continuous strategic planning process that Fordham hopes to make a part of the University’s culture—one that seeks new ideas by crossing traditional institutional boundaries and looking outside of Fordham while still linking to the core mission of the University and embracing operational processes that ensure effective and efficient management.

STEPS IN A LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The specific activities in strategic planning processes vary, based on the individual needs, expectations, culture, and time frames of the entities involved. The process described below includes common tasks, organized into the following phases:

- I. Establish an Effective Local Planning Team – *page 4*
- II. Obtain Stakeholder Input and Gather Other Information – *page 6*
- III. Scan the Environment: – *page 8*
- IV. Conduct a SWOT Analysis – *page 8*
- V. Summarize and Discuss Initial Analyses – *page 8*
- VI. Develop a Preliminary Architecture of the Strategic Plan – *page 9*
- VII. Prepare Iterative Drafts of the Strategic Plan – *page 10*
- VIII. Engage Stakeholders and Obtain Feedback on Penultimate Draft of Plan – *page 10*
- IX. Review Stakeholder Feedback and Finalize Strategic Plan – *page 11*
- X. Develop Initial Metrics and a Monitoring Process – *page 11*

The table on the following page provides an overview of these phases and their anticipated time frames based on Fordham’s goal of completing local unit strategic planning during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Fordham University Continuous Local Strategic Planning: Time Frames for Local Planning Activity

Draft of July 25, 2016

Activities	2016					2017					
	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Establish an effective local planning team		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Obtain stakeholder input and gather other information						> and selectively throughout the process <					
Scan the environment											
Conduct a SWOT analysis											
Summarize and discuss initial analyses											
Develop preliminary architecture of strategic plan											
Prepare iterative drafts of strategic plan											
Engage stakeholders and obtain feedback on penultimate draft											
Review stakeholder feedback and finalize strategic plan											
Develop initial metrics and a monitoring process											

I. Establish an Effective Local Planning Team (*no later than mid-September 2016*)

While good strategic planning requires widespread participation from the often-numerous stakeholders in the process, it is critical to designate a core team responsible for developing the strategic plan itself, managing the planning process to that end, and ensuring effective coordination with other local and university-wide planning groups and processes.

Some suggestions for establishing and enabling an effective local strategic planning committee (SPC):

A. Leadership

The SPC should have a chair (or co-chairs) who:

- Is either the unit's leader (in this case, the dean or vice president) or is appointed by the leader, updates him or her regularly on the SPC's progress, and can adequately represent the unit leader's views in Committee discussion;¹
- Has the stature, access, and administrative support to manage the planning process (e.g., scheduling meetings, connecting with leaders of other local or university units, etc.); and
- Is respected throughout the unit and is a capable meeting facilitator.

B. Membership

The composition of the SPC should reflect the composition of the unit as a whole. In an academic or administrative unit of a university, the membership would typically include representation of faculty, staff and students.

- The proportion of each group need not mirror that of the unit as whole as long as the Committee is satisfied that the voices of each constituency will be heard in its meetings.
- Besides faculty, staff and students, SPC members sometimes include the following:
 - *Alumni* (of the relevant college or department in the case of an academic unit or of the university as a whole in the case of some administrative units);
 - *Faculty or staff of other local units* with which the given unit has (or desires) significant interaction/collaboration or from which it can obtain desired perspectives or expertise;²

¹ When the head of the academic or administrative unit does not chair the SPC, he or she should attend selected meetings at regular points in the planning process to advise, listen to discussion, resolve high-level questions and issues, and provide visible support for the efforts of the SPC.

² This is particularly relevant in Fordham's Continuous Strategic Planning process, where a key principle is the crossing of traditional institutional academic and administrative boundaries.

- *Service recipients*, who can provide a perspective on their needs and how well these are met by the department; and
 - *Outside partners*, typically representatives of organizations in the private, public, or not-for-profit sectors who have important relationships with the local unit (e.g., as providers of internships, sources of expertise, employers of graduates, etc.)
- The SPC should strive to include a wide variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This will mean attending to such characteristics as:
 - *Diversity*—ensuring representation among members of the SPC of racial, ethnic, national, gender, age and other personal characteristics similar to those of the unit, the university, the student body, the broader stakeholders, and the surrounding community;
 - *Time at Fordham*—providing a good mix of institutional knowledge and new perspectives on the University;
 - *Point in career*—particularly among faculty so that the views of full professors, new assistant professors, and adjuncts and senior and junior staff are represented; and
 - *Experience outside Fordham*—including similar positions at other academic institutions as well as roles in other organizations and even other careers.

C. Size

Appropriate size for the SPC should largely depend on the size and complexity of the local planning unit, the variety of stakeholders that should be represented, and the need to ensure the right mix of backgrounds, perspectives and skills. In general, to ensure both critical mass and manageable meetings, the size of the Committee should be in the range of 8-10 people.

D. Capabilities/Requirements

Besides the variety of personal and professional perspectives they bring, SPC members should be:

- Willing and able to attend all SPC meetings, on the assumption that the Committee will meet on at least a monthly basis for approximately two hours;
- Available to lead sub-committees or task forces that the SPC may decide to create and which would typically meet between meetings of the full SPC;
- Willing to put pen to paper between meetings to draft content for discussion and eventually for the local strategic plan;

- Be thought leaders, decision influencers, and good citizens in the local unit and Fordham community who seek out and share the views of others with respect and collegiality; and
- Be active, thoughtful, and good listeners, willing to share opinions in meetings, listen carefully to others, synthesize views and strive for consensus among the Committee members. They should also be able to speak forcefully for what they believe without pursuing a narrow agenda.

II. Obtain Stakeholder Input and Gather Other Information *(September and October 2016 intensively and then selectively throughout the process)*

Inclusiveness and transparency are fundamental to building credibility for the planning process, buy-in to the strategic plan that results, and commitment and participation by stakeholders in the numerous ongoing planning activities. Important steps for creating an inclusive planning process include the following:

A. Stakeholder Input

It is important to engage the unit's stakeholders—both whether inside or outside the unit—throughout the planning process. Steps to consider early in the planning process include:

- Listening sessions for specific stakeholder groups (e.g., junior faculty, established faculty, staff, students; etc.) that provide opportunities for stakeholders to discuss concerns frankly among their peers; and
- Open sessions cutting across different stakeholder groups, enabling the participants to hear (and hopefully come to appreciate) concerns of individuals very different from themselves.

There are a wide variety of formats and forums through which to engage stakeholders throughout the process, including planning retreats, town hall meetings, brown bag lunches, individual interviews, SPC subcommittees and task forces, and established bodies and meetings (e.g., council of department heads, college student association, dean's advisory group, alumni council, etc).

It is helpful also to provide diverse avenues for electronic input and participation, including, for example:

- A local unit strategic planning website, (which can be used for “free-form” input, responses to specific questions posed by to stakeholders by the SPC, surveys, and obtaining feedback on documents developed during the planning process);

- An SPC email address—managed by a member of the Committee with administrative support—for submission of thoughts and ideas;
- Functionality for submitting input anonymously via the planning website; and
- Ability to post comments and replies on the planning web page, a designated strategic planning Facebook page, or other social media in order to create a dialogue among stakeholders (requiring some form of moderation by an SPC member or administrative support).

***Encouraging Digital Conversations
Across the Planning Units***

CUSP will oversee expansion of the current Fordham continuous planning web page to support local planning. The expanded site would provide strategic planning tools and information on which local units could draw, local pages for individual units to use in gathering input and sharing ideas during their processes and, most importantly, digital forums that could be used to share emerging ideas and themes among the academic and administrative units, encourage dialogue around them, and stimulate collaboration in shaping them further.

B. Information Gathering

The preceding discussion of stakeholder input describes numerous approaches to obtaining information and ideas from individuals and groups. Additionally, the SPC will want to examine other print and electronic information such as:

- Current or past strategic plans developed by the local unit;
- Plans or analyses developed by sub-units of the local unit, such departments, programs, task forces, and the like;
- Self-studies prepared by the local unit or its departments/programs for accreditation purposes as well as reports issued in response by accrediting bodies;
- Fact books, promotional materials, and enrollment, marketing, fundraising or financial analyses developed by the local unit (or similar materials prepared by other Fordham departments and divisions that bear on the local unit—for example, University student recruitment materials or enrollment plans).
- The local unit’s web pages; and
- Analyses of the local unit developed by external parties.

C. Communication Throughout the Process

In addition to seeking stakeholder input, the SPC should ensure that stakeholders receive ongoing information about the unit’s strategic planning process and the emerging strategic plan. Some suggestions:

- The planning website is an excellent “go-to” forum and should provide basic factual information about the planning process at its start (e.g., SPC membership,

overview of the process, time lines, information resources, dates of open meetings).

- As the process proceeds, the website can be updated with more informative data, such as SPC meeting summaries³, summaries of key ideas from stakeholder sessions, survey results, task force briefs, drafts of the strategic plan (and comments on them), and the like.
- The SPC should also employ various kinds of “push-out” communications, such as email blasts to stakeholders; progress updates to CUSP, PAC and other University-wide entities; brief oral summaries at various established unit meetings (e.g., a college’s SPC might provide department chairs with a page of bullet points and ask them to share these at departmental meetings). Such outgoing communications can also be used to encourage traffic to the website by notifying stakeholders of important updates (such as the release of a draft of the strategic plan) and providing them a click through directly to the new information.
- The same kind of forums used early in the process as mechanisms to obtain input can be used judiciously throughout the process to provide updates and especially to obtain feedback on ideas and drafts emerging from the planning process.
- Because Fordham’s continuous planning process emphasizes interaction and collaboration across traditional university boundaries, each local unit should consider how to use the communications methods described to share information and obtain input, selectively, from other local planning units.

III. Scan the Environment *(October – November 2016)*

Environmental scanning is the ongoing tracking of trends and occurrences in an organization’s internal and external environment that bear on its success, currently and in the future. Appendix IV provides an overview of environmental scanning. Additionally, it is a topic about which there is a very large amount of information easily available through an online search.

IV. Conduct a SWOT Analysis *(October – November 2016)*

The examination of a unit’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is a form of analysis widely discussed in academic, corporate, and community-organizing circles. Extensive information about SWOT approaches and tools is easily available online. SWOT analyses can draw extensively from the results of environmental scanning.

V. Summarize and Discuss Initial Analyses *(October – November 2016)*

SPC meetings are generally most effective when they focus on discussion of summative documents prepared for the meeting.

³ An “analytic summary” of a meeting, which groups and categorizes the major themes, ideas, and decisions, is more informative than a verbatim transcript or minutes and, in addition, is useful in beginning to shape the themes and priorities of the strategic plan.

- It is useful—even early in the planning process—to prepare a discussion document that articulates some initial strategic issues and themes based on the analyses described above.
- Such a document is most effective when it is relatively brief and provides both findings based on analyses and their implications, or “working hypotheses” The latter are essentially “straw man” assertions about the planning unit’s current strategic position, potential priorities, and possible new directions designed to provoke vigorous response and debate among members of the SPC.
- Discussing findings and working hypotheses allows a SPC to:
 - Identify areas of agreement and disagreement;
 - Pinpoint issues requiring additional analysis and/or discussion; and
 - Begin to describe the overall architecture of the strategic plan and content of its major sections.

A Digression on Terminology

While there is a wealth of confusing terminology in strategic planning—“priorities,” “goals,” “objectives,” “initiatives,” “tasks,” “action steps” and so on—we prefer not to get hung up in these and instead to call the parts of the plan whatever is clear to those involved in the planning process and to the audiences for the strategic plan. A shared understanding is useful. Spending time in debates over terminology is not.

For the purposes of this document, we have found it useful to use the terms “goal,” “strategy,” and “initiative” to describe three levels of strategic plan discourse. **Appendix II** provides working definitions and examples of each of these.

VI. Develop a Preliminary Architecture of the Strategic Plan *(by the end of December 2016 at the latest)*

Participants in planning processes find it helpful to have a picture of what the eventual strategic plan will look like and how it will be organized. It often helps to begin by creating a preliminary architecture, the primary component of which is simply four to six overarching strategic goals that address the unit’s priorities over the next three to five years. Other components of this architecture may include:

- The unit’s current mission statement, if one exists, or just space for a new/revised mission statement that will be developed later.⁴
- A very preliminary vision statement—perhaps nothing more than a few bullet points—that begin to sketch a picture of what the unit will look like when it successfully achieves its strategic goals.
- A set of values or principles that attempt to capture the unit’s culture—its ethos and the way in which it likes to “do business.” Often, these values capture ways of working that are not goals themselves but pervade everything the unit does.⁵

⁴ Appendix IV provides working definitions of “mission,” “vision,” and “values.”

VII. Prepare Iterative Drafts of the Strategic Plan *(December 2016 – March 2017)*

With some preliminary strategic goals in place, the planning committee can jump-start its development of the strategic plan by placing under each goal those ideas relevant to it that have arisen from the committee’s discussions. These ideas might be as specific as potential strategies and initiatives for achieving the goal or as general as observations and findings that might have an impact on it.

The approach for preparing drafts—the actual writing and revision—is entirely at the preference of the SPC and how its individual members like to write (e.g., delegating writing to one individual, assigning different topics to individual, creating small-groups responsible for different sections, etc.).

- Generating content for the plan can be done in many ways. It might entail having members and/or subcommittees of the SPC prepare drafts for review and discussion with the full Committee. It might also tap into relevant work being done by other individuals or committees (standing or ad hoc) on campus (e.g., a committee on student retention; a diversity and inclusion task force; etc.)
- SPC meetings held at least monthly would be opportunities for subcommittees or individual SPC members to present the results of their deliberations, which would then be debated, shaped and incorporated into the emerging strategic plan.
- Through iterations of drafting, SPC discussion, and revision, the committee strives to create a full strategic plan without getting bogged down in wordsmithing.
- The goal is to reach consensus on a “penultimate” draft of the strategic plan that can be shared widely among stakeholders for feedback.

VIII. Engage Stakeholders and Obtain Feedback on Penultimate Draft of Plan *(March – early April 2017)*

As described earlier, communication with stakeholders is important throughout the planning process. It is especially important to seek their input on a draft of the penultimate draft of the strategic plan and use this feedback for shaping the final version. This can be done in any way the planning unit chooses;⁶ however, whatever approach is chosen, it should ensure that:

- All stakeholders have an opportunity to review the draft plan and provide feedback (whether or not they choose to);

⁵ Planning committees often get bogged down attempting to draft complete mission and vision statements early in the process. At this stage, it is more useful simply to get down its general idea of what the unit wishes to look like five years hence—in bullet points, incomplete statements, short phrases—and then to come back to the vision and mission statements after further development of the specific strategies and initiatives to achieve the overarching goals.

⁶ Section II, above, “Obtain Stakeholder Input and Gather Other Information,” offers greater detail on how to engage stakeholders and maximize their participation and feedback.

- There are opportunities for stakeholders to discuss the draft with members of the SPC and head of the local planning unit; and
- Multiple avenues and forums are used for dissemination, review and discussion of the plan.

Useful approaches at this phase of the planning process include:

- Posting the draft plan on a page of unit's website with the capability for individuals to post comments publically online or to email their thoughts and suggestions privately to the SPC.
- One or more unit-wide town-hall discussions of the draft plan.
- Informal discussion of the draft by individual departments, with a summary of the comments reported to the SPC.

To encourage cross-college/department communication and collaboration, the planning unit may wish to have focused discussions about the draft plan with other Fordham units as well as with the University's senior leadership and possibly selected stakeholders outside of Fordham.

The unit should also seek input from CUSP and PAC on the draft plan, in particular, its alignment with the University Strategic Framework, the specifics of which have yet to be worked out.

IX. Review Stakeholder Feedback and Finalize Strategic Plan *(by end of May 2017)*

Once there has been sufficient discussion with stakeholders, the SPC should meet to discuss summaries of the feedback and identify final revisions to the strategic plan.

X. Develop Initial Metrics and a Monitoring Process *(May – June 2017)*

Good strategic planning is characterized by clear targets, metrics for evaluating progress toward them, regular reporting to the appropriate leaders and stakeholders, and opportunities for discussion and interpretation of the results.

- Subsequent to or concurrent with the final phases of a strategic planning process, the SPC or set of task forces can be charged with reviewing the specific goals of the plan, identifying desired results or targets, and developing quantitative and qualitative metrics to evaluate progress toward those ends.
- Such metrics are intended to help the unit evaluate whether it is moving closer to its desired goals and if the strategies and initiatives undertaken are effective in that movement. It is a fine distinction, but such metrics do not measure implementation of the strategic plan—that is to say, whether or not the specific activities and initiatives described in the strategic plan are going forward. Tracking implementation of the plan, while an important monitoring task, is a separate activity from evaluating the unit's movement toward its overall goals.

- In continuous planning, a dialectic often occurs in the process of developing metrics. In struggling to identify specific metrics for a goal, one sometimes realizes that such measurement is challenging because the goal—the desired end state—has not been defined clearly enough. Although frustrating, such realizations are opportunities to revise a goal to articulate more clearly “what success will look like” and then attempt again to create a clear metric based on the new definition of the goal.
- The metrics for a strategic plan should become the unit’s “dashboard”—a set of indicators that helps the unit determine if it is headed in the right direction, at the right pace, with the right resources, and ultimately if the place it arrives at looks like what the unit expected.
- Effective monitoring of a strategic plan requires that someone is charged with collecting data that apply to the specific metrics, organizing these data, and assisting in their interpretation. It is helpful if whomever handles this monitoring has facility with the unit’s and the University’s data management systems.
- Monitoring progress, however, should not be primarily the responsibility of one individual in the planning unit. The unit’s leadership should establish regular points at which data are reported so that:
 - Those leaders along with staff involved in implementation of the relevant goal can interpret the results, making sure there is a common understanding of what they mean, their broader implications for the academic/administrative unit or the University as a whole, and that appropriate follow-up steps are identified.
 - This is more effective when a clear, succinct “report card” with a standardized format is developed, one that becomes familiar and easy to understand to those most responsible for the achievement of specific goals. Report cards can be developed in multiple formats with metrics and different levels of detail appropriate to their readers.

REFRESH THE STRATEGIC PLAN ON A REGULAR BASIS

A good strategic plan is a living document. Environmental scanning, performance monitoring, and regular interpretation of the results of both these efforts are important means for ensuring that a strategic plan remains relevant and responsive. In addition, the planning unit should also begin a thorough review of its strategic plan by at least the midpoint of the plan. For example, for a strategic plan covering five academic years, the unit should reexamining the plan by approximately the middle of the third year, with a goal of releasing a refreshed version of the plan before the middle of the fourth year, the refreshed version looking out another five years into the future.

In the refresh process, the planning unit should take stock of its strengths and weakness, its accomplishments and less-successful efforts, as well as what relevant factors have changed

inside and outside the institution. While the steps of the refreshing process will be different for different units, basic elements typically include the following:

- A reexamination of every goal, strategy and initiative of the strategic plan;
- An assessment of which goals have been met, which have not, and why this is the case;
- A determination of how the goals and supporting initiatives should be recalibrated in light of this, as well as in response to significant changes in the internal and external environment. It is important to consider how modifications in one component of the plan may require changes in other goals and strategies; and
- The incorporation of fresh ideas that support the unit's mission, vision and values.

Principles for Fordham Local Continuous Strategic Planning

Congruence

Ensure that local planning takes account of the mission, vision, strategic objectives and goals in the University's Strategic Framework.

Inclusiveness

Make certain that all stakeholders – faculty, staff, students, service recipients, representatives from other units of the University – have meaningful opportunities to participate in and throughout the planning process.

Leadership and Oversight

Designate an individual or group with formal responsibility for oversight and coordination of the local planning effort and the ongoing activities that arise from it.

Environmental Scanning

Undertake ongoing tracking of internal and external environmental trends and events that bear on goals and strategies and ensure that the results of these scans are reviewed regularly and their implications for the goals of the strategic framework identified.

Linkage to Core Institutional Processes

Take account of such annual or regular processes (both at the University and local level) as budgeting, appointments and promotions, performance evaluation, facilities planning, fundraising, admissions and enrollment, among others, and ensure that strategic planning guides decision-making in these processes.

Collegiality

Make certain that the contributions and involvement of participants in planning activities are valued and recognized.

Measurement and Monitoring

Establish clear targets, metrics for evaluating progress toward agreed upon targets, regular reporting to the appropriate leaders and stakeholders, and opportunities for discussion and interpretation of the results.

Linkage

Make certain that local planning takes account of planning activities and efforts by other schools and administrative units. Including representatives of other units in local planning committees is often an effective way of ensuring linkage.

Regular "Refreshing"

Take account annually of environmental changes, progress in implementation, successes and less-successful efforts to date, status of planning in other academic and administrative units of the University and modify, refresh, and refocus plans accordingly.

Local Unit Continuous Strategic Planning

Definitions of Goals, Strategies, and Initiatives

I. Introduction and Definitions

The examples below are provided as illustrations of the relationships among different elements of a strategic plan. They are drawn from actual college and university strategic plans with which AKA|Strategy is familiar. In some cases, however, we have taken the liberty of revising text to maintain confidentiality or to make something clearer that would be difficult to understand out of context.

A few caveats about these examples:

- There is a wealth of terminology in strategic planning – “priorities,” “goals,” “objectives,” “initiatives,” “tasks,” “action steps,” *ad infinitum*. What do they mean? Whatever you want them to! That is to say, our bias is not to get hung up in the terminology and instead to call the parts of the plan whatever is clear to those involved in the planning process and to the audiences for the strategic plan. A shared understanding is useful. Spending time in debates over terminology is not.
- We have found it useful to use the terms “goal,” “strategy,” and “initiative” to describe the three levels of strategic plan components illustrated below. The definitions and rationales for these terms are essentially these:
 - “Goals” are broad targets (occasionally we refer to them as “overarching goals,” though not usually in the text itself). They are big, often general, outcomes an organization is striving to achieve. Typically, there aren’t more than five or six of these in a strategic plan.
 - “Strategies” are *what* the organization is going to do to achieve its goals – the “hows.”
 - “Initiatives” are the more specific activities the organization will undertake to put in place its strategy. Like strategies, they speak to “how,” though at a finer level of detail.
 - We’ll stop with these three levels because, in our opinion, more detailed items (*e.g.*, “tasks,” “work steps”) are generally part of implementation planning that follows completion of a strategic plan.
- Another important caveat is that “one person’s ‘goal’ is another person’s ‘strategy.’” In other words, depending on its scale or organizational level, the organization doing the planning (*e.g.*, university system, university, college/school, division, department, etc.), may consider something an overarching goal that a larger entity

would consider a strategy or tactic. As you look at the examples below, you'll realize that for every goal it's easy to imagine a higher order "goal" that would subsume it.

- Final caveat: These examples are drawn from *finished* strategic plans; hence, they are more polished and succinct than the ideas that come out of a typical planning committee early in its work. The role of the committee is to shape its initial ideas into a smaller and clearer set of goals, strategies and supporting initiatives through several iterations of discussion, drafting, review and redrafting. At the start of a planning process, "messy" is good if it generates smart ideas to consider. Winnowing, prioritizing, clarifying are also good. On the other hand, vagueness, abstract concepts, rambling text aren't so great.

II. Examples of Goals, Strategies and Initiatives

Example A: Arts and Sciences College within a Large Private University

Goal: *Improve the quality of the teaching and learning environment*

Strategy: *Build a world-class faculty*

Initiatives:

- Recruit at least [*number*] faculty members who have attained or have the potential to attain the highest honors in their discipline.
- Implement a faculty recruitment, retention, and development plan that is in line with our benchmark institutions.
- Provide faculty with the latest technology and training for leadership in teaching & learning, research, and career development.

Example B: College of Engineering within a Large Private Research University

Goal: *Build a research agenda that addresses society's most pressing challenges*

At the center of one of the nation's most densely populated urban corridors, adjoining a major transportation hub, and surrounded by numerous academic and corporate institutions, the College of Engineering is uniquely positioned to address needs of the city, region, and beyond. The College will be a leader in [*XYZ University's*] "One University" transformation by combining its expertise with the strengths of the other colleges, and deepening its relationships with industry to develop at least three interdisciplinary research areas focused on critical societal challenges.⁷

Strategy: *Establish the College among the leading voices on energy and the environment*

⁷ In this case, the college decided that strong introductory narrative paragraphs following each goal and strategy would help make them clearer and provide a context in which to present the specific initiatives, which are expressed in relatively terse phrases.

By working closely with the University's other colleges to build broad public understanding of the scientific, public policy, financial, and political issues surrounding energy and the environment, the College of Engineering will establish [XYZ University] as an expert institution on these inherently complex issues and a balanced and thoughtful party in the public debate that surrounds them.

Initiatives:

- Develop research groups on new energy sources, economical conversion technologies, efficient storage methods, and optimal distribution systems.
- Promote research on environmental issues arising from energy production, new materials for energy conversion, and energy efficiency in the built environment.
- Build a strong focus on renewable energy production and green technologies.
- Disseminate research results broadly to inform the scientific community, public discussion, and policy formulation.

Example C: Public University with a Focus on Art & Design and Associated Business Fields

Goal: *Be an innovation center for creative industries worldwide*

Partner with creative industries worldwide to help anticipate and address key challenges, build a stronger culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at [University], and establish collaborations that translate creative ideas into action.

Strategy #1: *Establish an "Innovation Center@[University]" to foster research, creative work, and strategic partnerships*

Initiatives:

- Build three primary components into the Innovation Center:
 - A think tank that would pursue visionary forecasting, propose new approaches to common problems in the creative industries, and identify public policy implications and approaches.
 - An incubator that will move projects from concept to reality.
 - A partnership collective that will intensify research and creative collaborations with local educational institutions, governmental agencies, non-profits, and businesses.
- Explore development of a "Small Business Development Council" that would be affiliated with the Innovation Center.
- Pursue advanced research that will foster product development, address pressing issues in industry and the marketplace, and catalyze creative activity across disciplines.

Strategy #2: *Create an organizational and information infrastructure that promotes innovation and experimentation*

Initiatives:

- Use visiting professorships, artist residencies and graduate fellowships to develop clusters of innovators and thought leaders focused on similar research interests.
- Build partnerships with the numerous regional incubators to leverage their expertise and ensure the strongest positioning for *[University]*.
- Develop a faculty scholar database to serve as a resource for researchers and artists within and outside of *[University]* and to raise external awareness of *[University]* faculty activity and achievements.
- Create faculty incentives for innovative and creative work, including support for teaching release and recognition for external and internal grants.

Environmental Scanning

Central to continuous planning is the ongoing tracking of trends and occurrences in an organization's internal and external environment that bear on its success, currently and in the future. The results of such environmental scanning are extremely useful in shaping goals and strategies. Some of the characteristics of and steps in effective environmental scanning, include:

- Internal issues and trends are those inherent to the institution itself, such as budget issues, enrollment fluctuations, fundraising opportunities, changes in leadership, and the like.
- External factors are forces in the environment outside of the institution and usually out of its control. Examples include changes and trends in:
 - Demographics – locally, regionally, nationally, and increasingly internationally (e.g., population, racial/ethnic mix, immigration status, education levels, etc.);
 - Politics and public policy, especially for public institutions that receive significant state funding, but also for private institutions, which must attend to changes in governmental regulation, Federal financial aid policies, and public attitudes toward institutions of higher education;
 - Labor market demand and the associated skills desired by employers;
 - Economies – local, regional, national and international;
 - Technology, the increasingly rapid changes in which bear on nearly every aspect of higher education;
 - Academic and employment interests of prospective students (and often their families);
 - Research interests and funding from governmental, private and foundation sources;
 - The philanthropic environment, not only changes in available funding but also in the attitudes, interests, and approaches of funders (e.g., the movement from philanthropy as “charity” to philanthropy as “investment” and the associated increased scrutiny and involvement of funders); and
 - The myriad interactions among these forces.
- Effective environmental scanning examines both quantitative and qualitative changes.

- The unit should create a set of key environmental indicators—internal, external, qualitative and quantitative—that it believes have the most important potential impact on it. It should examine these on a regular basis, and consider the specific implications of them for the institution.
- In addition to using this set of established indicators, unit leaders and others involved in continuous strategic planning should read broadly in the higher education press, examine popular media, attend conferences and presentations, and in general consider the cultural changes around them that may bear on the goals of their institutions.
- In effective continuous planning, the institution establishes regular forums in which to discuss the potential implications of environmental changes that are not easily categorized or foreseen. (For example, the invention of the iPhone and subsequent explosion of phone/device apps have radically changed access to information and how it is manipulated and shared.)
- Local units should take advantage of information in environmental scans of the institution and other reports developed by the university's IR function. However, local unit environmental scanning should also consider trends and issues directly relevant to its specific focus. (For example, while changes in technology affect all institutions, a college of medicine may want to examine specific changes relevant to its discipline, such as automated diagnostic support, digitization of medical records, and the like.)

Some Definitions of Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Describes the institution's *purpose*—why it exists, who it serves, and what its desired outcomes and impacts are.

Vision

The “Big Idea”: An overarching *aspiration* for the institution and a description of what it will be three to five years hence—what success will look like when the institution achieves the goals of its strategic plan.

Values

A small set of the values, each described in a phrase or sentence, that characterize the ethos of the institution, the principles that govern official and unofficial actions and behavior. Values are often expressed in language such as:

- *Service to Students*: Our students are our *raison d'être*. Their needs and interests will always be the core focus of our mission.
- *Diversity*: By ensuring socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, national and religious diversity, we contribute to the intellectual and personal growth of all members of our community.
- *Independent Thinking*: When combined with collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching, learning, research and scholarship, independent thinking forms an essential catalyst for continuous innovation.
- *Transformative Daring*: our support for thoughtful risk-taking that leads to successes that improve our world dramatically—and sometimes to failures that we confront with resilience, curiosity and renewed desire to overcome hurdles to our goals.
- *Inspired Excellence*: our desire to achieve the highest levels of success by drawing strength and understanding from the talents of those around us and from our interactions with them.