

A GUIDE TO

*Strategic Planning for
African Higher Education Institutions*





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African Higher Education Institutions*

Fred M. Hayward and Daniel J. Ncayiyana

with

Jacqueline E. Johnson



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CHET

PO Box 29204, Sunnyside, 0132

www.chet.org.za

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ISBN 1-919833-43-9

Produced by comPress

www.compress.co.za

This publication was made possible through the support provided by USAID/South Africa, under the terms of Award No. 674-G-00-00-00003-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development. The views also do not necessarily reflect the views of the other partner in the project, the Department of Education nor those of all the members of the CHET Board.



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Foreword

The Effective Governance Project aims to build the skills and capacity of the councils, institutional governance structures, student representative councils and institutional forums in South African higher education institutions. Common to all these governance structures is the need for planning, whether it be a three-year rolling plan for the whole institution, a strategic plan for the council, an annual plan for the SRC or the forum, or a strategic plan for a faculty or a department.

While it is so that all these structures have specific needs and functions, the basic principles of strategic planning are generic. This guide focuses on the institution as a whole, but will also be useful for a wide range of structures within the institution. The importance of strategic planning and the context in which it is carried out are emphasised.

This study provides an easy-to-use step-by-step guide to strategic planning. It moves from first steps, through eight stages of the process, including implementation. It also spells out the contemporary context of strategic planning as well as the conditions that make planning especially important to African higher education. The *Guide* includes strategic planning examples from a number of countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and the United States.

The two authors have an enormous depth and breadth of experience in planning at a variety of levels in higher education and have given dozens of workshops in South Africa, Namibia, Ghana and the United States. Fred Hayward started planning as a dean of social science in the USA and Daniel Ncayiyana as a dean of the medical school in Transkei. Fred then managed the Ford and USAID-funded strategic planning project in South Africa for the American Council on Education over six years and has worked on planning in other African countries, including Namibia and Ghana. Dan continued to be involved in planning when he was acting vice-chancellor of the University of Transkei, deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Cape Town, then vice-chancellor of M.L. Sultan Technikon and now of the Durban Institute of Technology. Their earlier jointly authored work *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, also published by CHET, is now in its fifth printing and has been widely used in South Africa, Namibia, Ghana and Gambia.

We think you will find the *Guide to Strategic Planning* a very helpful and thoughtful tool for strategic planning and believe it will make the process easier and more effective.

Preface

We have written this guide on the fundamentals of effective strategic planning for colleges, universities and technikons to provide information, suggestions, strategies and guidance to help higher education institutions in the complex, often frustrating, yet crucial, area of strategic planning. Much of the material presented here grows out of our work on strategic planning with universities and technikons in South Africa and Namibia over the last 15 years plus experience in the United States and elsewhere in Africa. We have tried to provide insights from what we have learned, strategies that have been effective, approaches that might enhance your efforts, and ideas that might help institutional leaders navigate the difficult terrain on campus as they seek to mould consensus, build commitment, and foster enthusiasm for both the strategic planning process and the plan itself.

This guide is designed to:

- provide basic information about strategic planning;
- suggest why thoughtful, focused strategic planning is vital to the successful operation of a college, university or technikon;
- help prepare you for some of the major challenges of strategic planning;
- present an overview of the framework and stages of the planning process;
- recommend who should be involved in the process and clarify their roles;
- provide tools that will help make the strategic planning process work; and
- highlight approaches, key conditions and elements for strategic planning success.

Strategic planning is guided by fundamental assumptions about the functions and roles of higher education in society and, most importantly, about the vision, mission, goals and place of that specific institution in society. In this sense, no two strategic plans will be the same. Each will be defined by the mission it sets for itself, its current capacity, its goals for the future, the accuracy of its assessment of the environment, and the effectiveness of its implementation.

Higher education institutions continue to be among the oldest surviving institutions in the world because they provide for a broad range of the needs of successful societies. Among their vital functions are: the advancement and transmission of knowledge, learning and wisdom; opportunities for intellectual, ethical and skill development of individual students; the provision of an engine for the nation's development and growth; service as a repository of a society's knowledge and culture; the provision of key links to economic, social and political



development to members of the society; and contribution to the well-being of the community, the nation and societies internationally.

This broad range of functions suggests, however, that no one institution can fill them all. Indeed, in this complex age, we know of no single institution that succeeds in doing so, nor is there reason to believe such an institution would be desirable. The implication, therefore, is that institutions of higher education and their strategic plans must reflect the breadth of needs and goals through:

- differentiation of functions and specialisation between institutions;
- a focus on functions seen as primary to the mission of each institution;
- recognition of a wide range of societal needs for training and development;
- awareness of the continually changing needs of students and citizens for lifelong learning;
- specialisation of research and experimentation, in at least some institutions, to deal with the rapid pace of change and new opportunities created by them;
- an openness to outside scrutiny; and
- recognition that the success of higher education is dependent on individual creativity, an openly competitive environment, and an educational culture that fosters new knowledge and technological excellence.

The critical role of tertiary education in the development of any society has been highlighted in a recent World Bank report.¹ The authors note that, ‘... knowledge accumulation and application has become one of the major factors in economic development and is increasingly at the core of a country’s competitive advantage in the global economy’.² They continue by pointing out that:

... the role of tertiary education in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies is now more influential than ever. Tertiary education is indeed central to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of lifelong learning practices necessary to update one’s knowledge and skills.

The authors stress that:

Developing and transitional countries are at risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive world economy because their tertiary education systems are not adequately prepared to capitalise on the creation and use of knowledge.³

These comments emphasise the importance of higher education and highlight the need to focus and plan carefully for the future. It is in this context that we have written this guide.

This booklet reflects our personal experiences and viewpoints as educators and administrators, drawing heavily on our South African and American experiences. We hope that, as with our previous booklet, *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, readers will draw from this what is useful, ignore what is not, and make suggestions about useful additions and improvements.

We hope you will find this guide useful as you lead or participate in the critical work of strategic planning, helping to build on your institution's strengths, and focusing on the goals and strategies that will help your institution make a major contribution to higher education and national development. Our efforts are designed to stimulate debate about and inform the mission, vision, goals and planning process, and to help create the conditions needed to provide the ongoing change needed to make tertiary education institutions like yours the driving force in the knowledge production and dissemination so central to national development.

Dr Fred M. Hayward

Dr Daniel J. Ncayiyana

Endnotes

- 1 Education Group, Human Development Network. 2002. 'Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education'. A World Bank Report. Draft, 8 April 2002.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. ii.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. ii–iii.



Acknowledgements

This publication grew out of more than five years of collaboration between the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and the American Council on Education (ACE) on a series of projects in higher education. Among them was the *South Africa Project on Strategic Planning*, funded by the Ford Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development, which focused on strategic and financial planning at historically disadvantaged universities and technikons from 1993 to 1997. That project was followed by several others funded by the Ford Foundation, including the *Pilot Project Consortium on a New Higher Education Framework for South Africa*, and the CHET/ACE project, *Transformation in South African Higher Education*. This co-operation also resulted in an earlier CHET publication entitled *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, by Daniel Ncayiyana and Fred Hayward. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Ford Foundation throughout this collaboration and in particular to this project through both CHET and ACE.

Dr Jacqueline E. Johnson made substantive contributions to this guide in editing the final draft and adding important insights and examples. She is president of Jacqueline Johnson & Associates, LLC, a management and higher education consulting firm. She works with institutions of higher education, organisations and associations to create strategic directions, build capacity and enhance productivity.

There are several individuals to whom we have a special debt for their contributions to our work and thinking about strategic planning. Prof. Raymond M. Haas, former vice-president and professor of commerce at the University of Virginia, who served as a senior associate for strategic planning and presented numerous workshops on strategic planning in South Africa, was an inspiration and mentor during the five years we worked with higher education institutions in South Africa and Namibia. Dr Madeleine F. Green, vice-president for International Initiatives at ACE, was a tireless contributor, facilitator and fundraiser throughout this project. Dr Nico Cloete, director of CHET, has helped and encouraged us and facilitated the publishing of this *Guide*. We are also indebted to Nkulie Pityana, who worked with ACE on the strategic planning project, for her contributions to our thinking about long-term financial planning, and to Prof. Donald Crawford, former executive vice-president at the University of California Santa Barbara, who provided helpful information and suggestions about academic planning. We would also like to thank Alice Sena Lamprey of the Association of African Universities (AAU) for very useful suggestions and assistance.

Most important, have been the contributions of the presidents, vice-chancellors, rectors, chief financial officers, strategic planners, faculty, students, council members and citizens from South Africa, Namibia, and Ghana with whom we have worked since 1992. They contributed immensely to the workshops we gave, challenged us, sharpened our thinking, made suggestions and inspired us as we tried to put down on paper the thoughts, strategies and ideas we worked through together.

In many respects, the *Guide to Strategic Planning* is about change. In this respect, it reflects the pain, anxiety, frustration, false starts, satisfaction, joy, failure, and celebrations of success that accompany any concerted effort at transformation and growth. We are especially grateful to those who have shared this path with us.



About the Authors

Fred M. Hayward

Fred Hayward is a specialist on Africa and higher education with more than 25 years of experience as an educator, scholar and senior administrator. He has a Ph.D. from Princeton University and a B.A. from the University of California. He has taught at the University of Ghana, Fourah Bay College and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has been a research associate at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire in Dakar, Senegal. He was executive vice-president of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation during 2001–2002 and prior to that was senior associate for the American Council on Education (ACE) for more than ten years, working with higher education institutions in Africa and the United States on strategic and financial planning. He continues to be a consultant for ACE. Dr Hayward has written extensively on both African development and higher education. Among his publications are *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons* with Daniel J. Ncayiyana; chapters in Madeleine F. Green, ed., *Transforming Higher Education: A Worldwide View*; and *Elections in Independent Africa*.

Daniel J. Ncayiyana

Dan Ncayiyana is vice-chancellor of the Durban Institute of Technology in South Africa. Prior to that appointment, he was deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Cape Town. Forced into exile for Pan-African Congress (PAC) activities, he lived in the Congo and then moved to the Netherlands where he completed his medical degree. He specialised in obstetrics and gynaecology at the New York University Medical Center. He returned to South Africa in the mid-1980s, and served as professor of obstetrics and gynaecology, dean of medicine, deputy vice-chancellor, and acting vice-chancellor respectively at the University of Transkei from 1986 to 1993. Dr Ncayiyana is editor of the *South African Medical Journal*, secretary of the World Association of Medical Editors, has served as consultant and writer for the World Health Organization in Geneva, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Sciences of South Africa. He is co-author of *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons* with Fred M. Hayward.

About the Effective Governance Project

The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 puts forward co-operative governance as a new model for governing higher education. While providing guidelines with regards to the functioning of councils, institutional forums and student representative councils, the Act leaves much scope for individual institutions with regard to interpretation and implementation. A key function of the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Education is capacity building. During 1999 the Constituency Affairs Division of the Department of Education (DoE), in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as the funding agency and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) as the implementation agency, started a three-year project to assist institutions in making institutional governance more effective.

The Effective Governance Project focuses on three governance structures: councils, institutional forums and student leadership. The methods of capacity building are through the development of generic guidebooks and facilitator manuals, the training of facilitators for capacity development, conducting research on co-operative governance in key areas and the provision of focused support to a limited number of institutions.

The following individuals serve on the Advisory Committee for this project:

Professor Connie Mogale, Vice-Chancellor Technikon Witwatersrand; Professor Dan Ncayiyana, Deputy Vice-Chancellor University of Cape Town; Professor Stuart Saunders, former Vice-Chancellor University of Cape Town; Mr Khaya Matiso, Dean of Students University of Port Elizabeth; Ms Mel Hagen, Dean Cape Technikon; Ms Phindi Mabena, Equity Director South African Institute of Chartered Accountants; Ms Linda Vilakazi-Tselane, Human Resources Director Council for Scientific and Industrial Research; Mr Zola Saphetha, Secretary-General South African Technikons Student Union; Ms Nandipha Zonela, Secretary-General South African Union of Student Representative Councils; CHET and DoE representatives.



Setting the Context for Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning Defined

The Contemporary Context for Strategic Planning



Strategic Planning Defined

The fundamental purpose of strategic planning in higher education is to provide an ongoing process of examination and evaluation of an institution's strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource requirements and future prospects, and to set out a coherent plan to respond to the findings and build a stronger, more effective institution. It has been defined as '... a conscious process by which an institution assesses its current state and the likely future condition of its environment, identifies possible future states for itself, and then develops organised strategies, policies, and procedures for selecting and getting to one or more of them'.¹

Strategic planning is designed to strengthen and enhance the performance and quality of an institution. However, it should not be used as a vehicle to conduct reductions in staff or programmes considered unproductive. While one of the results of strategic planning may be the loss of staff or programmes, this should occur only as the result of careful institutional analysis that occurs throughout the strategic planning process. In fact, if staff reductions are anticipated, these should occur prior to launching the strategic planning process. Failing this, the process will be linked to the resulting losses, thus undermining its potential for success.

In some environments in which there is a near-total breakdown of institutional organisation and infrastructure owing to political misrule or armed conflict, strategic planning may very well have to be about restoring efficiency and bringing about operational effectiveness. Even so, the general aim should be to build an institution focused on what it can do best in the context of the national and global environments, and on its potential to maximise its contribution to meeting the needs of a nation and its citizens.

The Contemporary Context for Strategic Planning

Strategic planning does not occur in a vacuum. It happens within, and is shaped by such externalities as the higher education environment, national higher education policy and available resources, on the one hand, and by internal factors such as institutional culture, mission and vision, on the other.

Environmental factors

Universities around the world are confronted with external challenges requiring that they regularly reposition themselves if they are to survive. In the United States, the American Council on Education (ACE) observes how 'the pendulum has swung from the heyday of growth, prosperity, and public favor to new times that call for institutions to adapt themselves to current, harsher realities'.² There are six key challenges facing institutions of higher education. These are as follows:

A shift to the 'knowledge society'

The rapid, world-wide expansion of new information technology and improvements in communications technology have spawned a major expansion in the importance and promise of the knowledge society. The world is fast becoming a place where knowledge is in the process of supplanting physical capital as a source of wealth, and in which the quality and relevance of the knowledge conferred by higher education institutions (HEIs) is becoming increasingly crucial. Institutions perceived as offering quality education that is relevant to the 'real' world are more likely to survive. If national higher education systems are to be internationally competitive, and produce graduates that are employable in the current environment, they must make investments in information technology and the trained personnel required to operate and maintain the new and increasingly sophisticated equipment. This adds to the challenges of strategic planning and budget management. The challenges for African higher education institutions are particularly critical: avoiding the digital divide by obtaining state-of-the-art information technology for teaching, research and administration; providing high-level training for staff and students in information technology; and finding the resources needed to catch up and remain up to date.

Globalisation

In a world in which globalisation is a growing force – with expanding mobility of people, access to knowledge across borders, increased demand for higher education (including e-learning) in developing countries, growing world-wide investment, and increased requirements for adult and continuing education – the need to expand the capacity of higher education to meet the needs of globalisation has increased tremendously. As the World Bank's *Constructing Knowledge Societies* has emphasised, however, the developing world is behind in this area. Only careful planning will allow developing nations fully to become part of international economic, political and social structures. For most African higher education institutions, this poses a major challenge.

Under-resourcing

Higher education institutions worldwide are facing the problem of 'shrinking resources and rising costs, even in industrialised countries',³ owing to a variety of causes including: declining state financial support; inability of students – particularly from poor backgrounds – to afford the ever-increasing tuition and fees; and the massive spending needed to bring and keep libraries, classrooms and science and technology laboratories up to date. In this new 'electronic age', institutions are also grappling with the significant financial pressures generated by maintenance and repair costs of expensive equipment and the rising staff costs associated with specialised training required to manage new technologies.



Increased competition among institutions of higher education

Higher education has become extremely competitive with respect to students, staff and resources. Public higher education institutions face intense competition among themselves, from private institutions at home and abroad, and from public and private institutions offering alternative models of post-secondary education delivery, including distance education and Internet-based programmes. Ann Grimes observes how profoundly Internet education (e-learning) has come to influence strategic thinking and planning, even at traditional HEIs. Grimes notes: 'Perhaps nowhere is the pinch between the old way of doing business and the new being felt more acutely than in the very birthplace of the Internet; the hallowed halls of academia ... With so many entrepreneurs out to chip away at their brick-and-mortar souls, colleges and universities of all stripes are defending their turf – in what analysts estimate to be a \$250-billion U.S. market – [and are] carving out a space for themselves in the for-profit online education world, trumping some 'e-learning' companies at their own game.'⁴ In addition, competition in higher education has increased markedly in recent years in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States as policymakers turn to market forces to reform higher education and cut costs.⁵ These are external factors that must be taken into consideration at the institutional level as plans are made for the future and lead to consideration of the following questions:

- How well can your institution meet the challenge of national and international competition?
- How can you prepare for more open markets?
- What protections should you seek from your government?

The needs of a diverse and divided society

Higher education institutions are called upon to serve an increasingly diverse and sometimes divided society in terms of language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, philosophical and political outlook, religion and educational background at the same time that globalisation demands greater mobility and flexibility. Nigeria is one example – among many in Africa – of a country split along all of these fault-lines in the wake of years of military rule. In South Africa, higher education institutions must also operate in the context of a society severely traumatised by decades of apartheid, and still in the process of recovery and healing. Apartheid created societal inequalities that have come to constitute perhaps the most difficult challenge with which the South African higher education institutions must contend.

To serve as an engine for development

Higher education institutions in Africa have a central role to play in national, regional and local development – one that has been neglected by far too many governments. As we have noted earlier, a recent World Bank study has emphasised the centrality of the role of higher education in national development and expressed concerns about its current capacities and the marginalisation of African states that do not develop competitive quality capacities in higher education. Higher education is not the province of the elite, nor should it be seen apart from the day-to-day life and development of societies. But, if it is to play that role, high quality, capacity to capitalise on the benefits of contemporary knowledge production and utilisation, and the ability to provide lifelong learning to its citizens is essential. This poses a major challenge to strategic planning for higher education institutions everywhere, but is particularly difficult for institutions in developing nations where such success is especially critical.

Notes

Endnotes

- 1 Peterson, M.W. 1980. 'Analyzing Alternative Approaches to Planning'. Improving Academic Management. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. p. 114.
- 2 Eckel, P., Hill, B. and Green, M. 1998. 'En Route to Transformation'. *ACE Occasional Paper Series*. p. 1.
- 3 See Mahoney, R.I. 1997. 'Reinventing the University: Object Lessons from Big Business'. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 October 1997.
- 4 Grimes, A. 2000. The Wall Street Journal, August 1, 2000.
- 5 See Newman, F. and Couturier, L.K. 2002. *Trading Public Good in the Higher Education Market*. The Observatory on borderless higher education, January 2002. p. 1.



Questions and Answers for Effective Strategic Planning

Why is Strategic Planning Important?

What are the Keys to Strategic Planning Success?

How Does Strategic Planning Focus Institutions?

What is the Role of Leadership in Successful Strategic Planning?

How Does Strategic Planning Fit into the National Policy Framework?

What are the Major Elements of a Strategic Plan?

Who Should Participate in the Strategic Planning Process?



Why is Strategic Planning Important?

Strategic planning in higher education in the current era takes on even greater importance today than it did even a decade ago. The changing needs of higher education and society, the growth of information technology, the communications revolution, fluctuations in access to financial and human resources, and the rapid pace of change in other aspects of the environment in which higher education operates, give strategic planning an added urgency. More than this, however, in the prevailing environment of fierce competition for outstanding staff, students and resources, strategic planning is about *positioning*, defining, or discovering the institution's niche, and seeking to be the best in what it can do. Harvard's Michael Porter says 'strategic positioning' means performing activities *different* from those that rivals perform, or performing similar activities in *different ways*.¹

According to Porter, strategy must be differentiated from 'operational effectiveness', although both are essential to superior performance. Operational effectiveness 'means performing similar activities *better* than rivals perform them ... [It] includes but is not limited to efficiency'² and refers to any number of practices that achieve superior results through better utilisation of resources. Strategic planning provides the framework to achieve operational effectiveness and benchmarking for best practices.

What Are the Keys to Strategic Planning Success?

Strategic planning is a dynamic process requiring a high standard of future-focused thinking on the part of those involved in the planning process. Among the keys to strategic planning success at an institutional level are the:

- creativity and viability of the vision, mission and goals developed for the future;
- commitment of the institution's leadership to the plan;
- extent to which the vision is communicated, understood and shared by the institution's leadership and members;
- scope and depth of analysis involved;
- relationship of the plan to budget, human capacity and environmental realities;
- care with which the plan is developed and implemented;
- early achievement of smaller goals that are noted publicly and celebrated;
- ability to be flexible in the course of implementation; and
- commitment to ongoing review, evaluation and adjustment of the plan on a regular basis.

In the end, a strategic plan is only as successful as the mission, vision, goals and values it enshrines, as well as the accuracy of the environmental assessment, institutional capacity, resources needed and time frame for implementation. At one level, the strategic plan must be carefully crafted, the constituents consulted, and major participants convinced of its value and feasibility. At another level, the most important factors affecting success are the *ideas* and *creativity* that go into thinking about the goals to be achieved and preparation for the ever-changing realities of reaching them. The ability to mobilise the human capacity needed to reach desired goals and the accuracy of predictions about the environment are especially important to successful planning.

Planning results in **decisions**.
It is fundamentally a **change** process.³

Success is also more likely if there is a common and accepted understanding that the strategic plan is to be created in the context of current budget parameters and that there will be no increase in budgets. This has critical implications for decisions that may be made to channel resources to priority programmes during the implementation phase, which may result in decreases in funding or even funding cuts in programmes deemed unsuccessful in the context of the new mission, vision and goals that are developed.

While a realistic assessment of the financial resources needed is essential, abundant funding without excellent ideas, committed leadership and talented human resources is likely to produce neither a successful plan nor desired results.

How Does Strategic Planning Focus Institutions?

One of the vital aspects of strategic planning is to focus attention and thinking on the academic strengths of the institution that will promote excellence and meet national needs in the future. It requires discussions, which include representatives of all institutional stakeholders, about the mission, vision and goals of the institution, prioritisation of goals and thoughtful reflection about the future. Some decisions about institutional focus will flow from an assessment of the environment; some will become clear as a result of a careful review of current strengths and weaknesses; while other decisions about appropriate focus will follow from a thoughtful assessment of national needs and predictions about the future. In the end, however, successful strategic planning should result in an enhanced institutional focus for all stakeholders.

Strategic planning usually involves 'trade-offs' as well. It is about accepting that an institution cannot excel at everything. Trade-offs may involve dropping



academic programmes that detract from the institution's niche. At the same time, however, it is about supporting and enhancing those areas in which an institution excels or those that define the core of its mission, vision, goals and values. And it is about positioning the institution in its region, locality and nation, in a context that requires excellence and competitiveness. In his essay entitled 'Re-inventing the University', Mahoney suggests some questions that may be appropriate in the planning of an institution's strategy: 'What are the core functions and departments of the institution? Can you dispose – I don't use that word lightly – of unproductive programmes? What is the primary goal of the institution?'⁴

What are we and what do we want to be? Can we honestly say we excel in specific areas compared to other institutions? Can we survive without staking out areas of excellence? UDW has strong areas, but are they enough to sustain the university? We have strong academics, but are they enough to carry the university as a whole?⁵

An example of institutional trade-offs comes from South Africa where, until recent times, only one university offered courses and degrees in Indian languages such as Urdu, Hindi and Gujarati, as a niche area. However, community support for these courses diminished and student interest waned over time to the point that there were few students enrolled in these language courses and this niche ceased to be a centre of excellence. Thus, the university was obliged to confront the difficult and politically sensitive issue of their cost and viability, and reluctantly decided to close down the departments, which generated cost savings.

On the other hand, cost alone should not determine whether a course or a programme remains on offer. An institution may make the strategic decision to retain its school of music, dance or opera, despite the disproportionately high cost of related courses, because of its international reputation, high level of student demand, outstanding staff and contribution to the campus community.

What is the Role of Leadership in Successful Strategic Planning?

The active and enthusiastic support of the vice-chancellor, principal, rector or president,⁶ and other senior leaders is essential for successful strategic planning. Such leaders are able to play a role in shaping the future of their own institutions, higher education in general, and the country as a whole. Vice-chancellors and senior leaders need to lead the strategic planning process and be seen as strongly supportive of a wide range of options and involved in the process, while at the same time giving the planning committee sufficient latitude to explore a wide range of options. They should be active in all the major aspects of planning, such as preparing and articulating the mission and vision statements, goals, priorities and values. Their experience and creativity should be reflected in the vision and

direction of the institution. If key leaders are not committed to and engaged in the process, it is unlikely to be successful.

Leaders need to ‘... engage people in a journey. They lead in such a way that everyone on the journey helps shape its course. As such, enthusiasm inevitably builds along the way.’⁷

How Does Strategic Planning Fit Into the National Policy Framework?

It is vitally important that strategic planning takes place within the context of the national policy framework on higher education, if there is one. If not, the strategic planning process should include an assessment of how the institution measures up to the generally accepted national expectations, assumptions and aspirations for higher education – or help define it. In other words, the strategic plan should position the higher education institution within the context of the higher education framework (formal or informal) in a way that recognises national education objectives and self-consciously builds on the institution's vision and goals.

In this regard, we look at South Africa as being representative of a country with a well-established higher education system and a well-developed national policy framework, despite its implementation still being under way and some aspects of change remaining contested.

Nigeria has a framework and policies that are currently in a state of change. University senates now once again play a role in the appointment of vice-chancellors. A proposal for decentralisation, which would weaken the role and authority of the National Universities Commission (NUC)⁸ and strengthen institutional autonomy, is also under discussion, however. The resulting ambiguity makes institutional planning difficult since the locus of authority and control is unclear. Will major control continue to be exercised by the NUC, or be devolved to the institutions? While government seems to be leaving the appointment of vice-chancellors to institutions, the NUC continues to assert control over Nigeria's universities. Furthermore, there is neither consensus nor clear national policy spelling out the NUC's authority over higher education.

This does not imply that a formal ‘national policy’ needs to exist. Indeed, the decentralised nature of higher education in the United States would suggest this/it is unnecessary. What South Africa and the United States have in common is a national consensus about the mission, goals and aims of higher education. A national higher education policy that reflects national consensus provides a useful anchor for strategic planning. No such consensus exists in Nigeria at present. A brief discussion of the policy frameworks in both South Africa and Nigeria can be found in Appendix A.



What are the Major Elements of a Strategic Plan?

The four fundamental elements of an institution's strategic plan are:

- a mission statement;
- a vision for the future premised on institutional values;
- goals; and
- a financial plan developed to support the strategic plan.

Each of these elements is defined below.

Mission statement

A mission statement is fundamental to strategic planning. It is an assertion of an institution's *raison d'être*, or purpose, and should clearly define its ideals as well as the products and services that will be offered and to whom. It informs an institution's financial planning, budgeting, staffing and academic programming. One aspect of a mission statement relates to students, in terms of both institutional commitments and expectations.

An institution expresses its educational values and philosophy through its mission statement. It translates that statement into programs and services, through which students are to develop knowledge, abilities, habits of mind, behaviors, ways of thinking and knowing. And it sets expectations for student learning in core or general-education curricula; learning in a major or in preparation for a career; and learning of 'the ineffable' – that is, spiritual, moral, ethical, and social dispositions including 'leading an examined life'.⁹

The mission statement should be a general statement of values, aims and goals of the institution. An effective mission statement will be clear, precise and transparent about commitments, long-term goals and values. It usually includes a commitment to high standards and levels of performance, discussion of the context of the institutional environment, recognition of institutional obligations to the community, the nation and the world, and commitment to its students. In some cases, major components of the mission statement are spelled out in an Act of government or other enabling legislation. A mission statement ordinarily consists of two parts:

- a high-level preamble that encapsulates the gist of the institutional mission; and
- a narrative portion that lists the particularities and elaborates on the implications of the mission statement in practical terms.

The following six questions should be answered by the mission statement:

1. Who are we?
2. What is our purpose?
3. How do we recognise or anticipate needs or problems?
4. How should we respond to our key stakeholders?
5. What is our philosophy? What are our core values?
6. What makes us distinctive or unique?¹⁰

Sample mission statements

The University of Pretoria:

- is an internationally recognised academic institution;
- provides quality teaching, research and community service;
- meets the educational, cultural, social, economic and technological needs of the Southern and South African communities;
- is part of the international academic community; and
- stands in the service of its staff, students and community.

The vision and mission of the University of Pretoria are pursued within the context of an accountable system of academic, religious, moral, social and cultural values.¹¹

In its quest to train entrepreneurial leadership, ML Sultan Technikon strives for the transformation of higher education through sustainable, quality teaching, learning, research and development programmes in participation with industry and the wider community.¹²

... the mission of Duke University is to provide a superior liberal education to undergraduate students, attending not only to their intellectual growth but also to their development as adults committed to high ethical standards and full participation as leaders in their communities; to prepare future members of the learned professions for lives of skilled and ethical service by providing excellent graduate and professional education; to advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute boldly to the international community of scholarship; to promote an intellectual environment built on a commitment to free and open inquiry; to help those who suffer, cure disease, and promote health, through sophisticated medical research and thoughtful patient care; to provide wide-ranging educational



opportunities, on and beyond our campuses, for traditional students, active professionals and lifelong learners using the power of information technologies; and to promote a deep appreciation for the range of human difference and potential, a sense of the obligations and rewards of citizenship, and a commitment to learning, freedom and truth.

By pursuing these objectives with vision and integrity, Duke University seeks to engage the mind, elevate the spirit, and stimulate the best effort of all who are associated with the University; to contribute in diverse ways to the local community, the state, the nation and the world; and to attain and maintain a place of real leadership in all that we do.¹³

Vision statement

An effective vision statement is vital to a strategic planning process. A vision statement describes what an institution aspires to become in the future and the values it enshrines. It captures in detail what things could be like at the institution if it were functioning effectively and focuses on the contribution the institution will make to society. In the long run, a successful strategic plan must be premised on institutional values, such as:

- academic freedom;
- institutional autonomy;
- high quality;
- equal access; and
- non-discrimination (by race, ethnic affiliation, religion and gender).

A clear vision will:

- provide focus at both strategic and operational levels;
- give specific guidance to members of the institution about what is expected of them and why;
- guide decision-making and help avoid and resolve conflict;
- contrast the institution as it is with one you would like it to be; and
- inspire and motivate constructive behaviour among management and staff.¹⁴

The vision should inspire, challenge and focus the institution. It needs to be memorable and easily understood. Part of its purpose is to mobilise the campus community to focus on excellence as it formulates its hopes and plans for the future.¹⁵

A successful strategic plan is a 'living document' which draws its inspiration from the stated vision, and which must constantly be reviewed, adjusted and revised, so that long-term goals and the methods chosen to achieve them conform to current realities and to the best guesses about tomorrow.

Sample vision statements

The University of Fort Hare aspires to become a vibrant, equitable and sustainable African university committed to teaching and research excellence that builds upon its unique historical leadership role and rural location to provide an attractive and enriching educational service to its graduates and scholars to become meaningful and critical participants in the social, economic and political development of society.¹⁶

The Peninsula Technikon will be a centre of excellence for career education. The Technikon will be recognised by the community, commerce and industry as well as the public sector as being responsive to the needs of society. The Technikon will be a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic community.¹⁷

[The vision of the University of Maryland is to be] ... One of the nation's pre-eminent public research universities, an institution recognised both nationally and internationally for excellence in research and instruction, which makes the results of its research available for the use and benefit of the State of Maryland and its people.¹⁸

Institutional goals or objectives

Institutional goals help translate the institutional vision and mission into action. Goals should state clearly the conditions for institutional effectiveness, and the norms and expectations of students and staff. They should reflect the needs of the community and the society as a whole. They should present a broad statement of the aims of the institution. Such goals might include: to be the national leader in the sciences; to focus on national needs in health care; to help develop surrounding communities; to foster lifelong learning; to be open to all people regardless of background.

Sample goals and objectives

The goals of the University of Durban-Westville are:

- to make university education accessible to all, especially to students who are financially and educationally disadvantaged, thereby opening up opportunities for their personal growth and empowerment;



- to promote teaching and research in a context of social responsibility and academic excellence; and
- to encourage cultural, intercultural, and spiritual understanding and tolerance.¹⁹

The goals of Duke University are to:

- build an excellent faculty in every school;
- significantly strengthen science and engineering;
- be among the best universities at integrating teaching, learning and research;
- promote major multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programs;
- promote diversity in all aspects of university life;
- intensify the use of information technology;
- nurture the personal and intellectual growth of students by building community in social, civic and academic realms;
- extend our global reach and influence; and
- take a leadership role in building partnerships and collaborations in the Research Triangle, the state, and beyond.²⁰

The seven objectives of Makerere University's strategic plan are:

- Organisational and operational efficiency to be improved.
- Human resources to be improved and developed.
- Create ability to mobilize and allocate resources better.
- Improve the university's capacity and quality in areas of teaching and learning.
- Enhance the university's capacity to conduct high-quality and relevant research.
- Improve the capacity and quality as well as relevance of the university's services.
- Build new physical infrastructures to cater for more students and improve the quality of education.²¹

Financial plan and institutional budget

A good strategic plan serves as a blueprint and a source document for the operational financial plan and underpins the institutional budgeting process. The fundamental purpose of an institutional budget is to support the core business as embodied in the goals of the institution's strategic plan. It functions best if it

reflects the real cost of achieving institutional goals within the context of reasonable expectations about income.

In a paper written to explain the budget process to the University of Michigan academic community, Nancy Cantor and Paul Courant articulate the approach to budgeting as: ‘what we believe we should do with the current budget system in order to *serve the academic purposes of the university* [emphasis added]. Thus, this paper is as much about these purposes as about the details of the budgeting system. Our task is to be clear about the [University of Michigan’s academic] commitments, and to configure the budget so as to make these “desired doings” as affordable as possible.’²²

This year each department will be required to develop a three-year plan which, once costed, will be considered part of the budget development and allocation process. Each department will be required to show how its plans contribute to the strategic objectives of the sector and each will be required to motivate and defend its budgetary requests.²³

The step-by-step budget process will naturally differ from institution to institution, depending on institutional and local traditions and practices. We do not seek to advocate a specific approach or sequence for generating an institutional budget. The purpose of this section is to illustrate, by way of examples of procedures followed at some institutions, the critical role of the strategic plan in the budgeting process of an institution.

Senior management and the budget

The actual budget process will vary from institution to institution. In most cases, the vice-chancellor and senior management will set out target parameters for the budget for a three- to five-year period with relatively clear targets for the upcoming fiscal year. It is crucial that general guidance be provided at this time, building on the existing strategic plan, or on current assumptions in the plan if the process is under way. Ideally, priority areas will receive additional funds to meet new goals while non-priority areas may face cuts to reflect the new or altered core functions of the institution. If the total budget for the institution is not yet clear, or the planning priorities not yet set, units may be expected to propose several budget scenarios (for example, five per cent higher and five per cent lower than the expected allocation). Budget allocations must reflect strategic planning priorities if the planning process is to have any meaning to the institution as a whole.

Unit budgets

Critical to the overall success of the planning effort is the care and thought put into the budget process at the level of the constituent units of the institution: a



school, a faculty, an administrative department such as human resources or a support unit such as student services. Each unit puts together its individual budget based on its own strategic plan which is, in turn, linked up with the institutional strategic framework based on the doctrine that resources must follow strategic objectives. For example, if the science faculty and the broader institution's strategic objectives are to broaden student access to science, and to shift the institutional thrust away from languages and biblical studies to science and technology, the science faculty might undertake to admit promising students who, owing to previous disadvantage, otherwise do not meet the threshold scores in high-school science and mathematics. The faculty would then undoubtedly have to make provision in its budget for special tutors to help these students catch up, thus boosting their chances for success. Similarly, an institution may have as another of its strategic objectives to enhance the safety and security of its campus. In line with this objective, the campus protection services may then budget for the establishment of an electronic security system to include a closed-circuit television network.

Some institutions have found it useful to use zero-based budgeting, whereby all units must assemble their entire budgets from scratch every year, and justify each line item in the context of the institution's strategic planning framework. The budget process must be absolutely transparent, and the budget proposals and eventual allocations must be accessible to all who may wish to examine them.

The strategic planning committee and the budget

Once all the unit and faculty budget proposals have been submitted, they need to be reviewed by senior management and the strategic planning committee. While the decision-making process will vary somewhat by institution, final decisions about the division of the funding 'cake' (for example, revenues, global expenditures, surpluses and deficits, and audits) must reflect the general mission, vision and goals of the strategic plan. The role of the strategic planning committee in the budget process is to scrutinise the proposed allocations for each unit and faculty in the context of the institution's strategic planning framework and its goals and priorities and to satisfy itself that the proposed allocations are in line with the institution's budget objectives. In a well-functioning institution, the iteration between the strategic planning committee and management begins early in the process, in order to present a consensus recommendation to the council.²⁴ If the budget is not tied to the strategic plan, it becomes completely irrelevant.

The primary function of the budget is to span the distance between intent and action.²⁵

The council, budget and planning

The final authority and responsibility for budget approval rests with the council. In an institution with well-functioning council, finance and institutional strategic planning committees, and where there are no conflicting recommendations between the three structures, the budget planning process should be smooth, reflecting general consensus about the process. The council then approves the budget on a global rather than a line-item basis.

A budget is the device by which an organization carries out its plans and by which it signals its priorities.²⁶

Under normal circumstances, council approves the strategic plan with its institutional goals and priorities prior to submission of the budget. Council members discuss the recommendations of the finance committee, make their input, and approve a final budget for the institution. If the strategic planning process has been carried out carefully, with good participation from all major sectors of the institution, this should be a relatively seamless process of checks and balances, which strengthens commitments to the strategic plans and the goals that have been articulated.

Who Should Participate in the Strategic Planning Process?

Successful strategic planning is inclusive, allowing every major stakeholder – management, teaching and research staff, support staff, students, the council, and other interested parties and stakeholders – an opportunity to participate. Successful strategic planning is not an exclusive function of the strategic planning committee. Invariably, there will be ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ input. In the end, strategic planning must receive the endorsement of the senate, the institutional forum (in the South African context) and the governing council.

Effective participation of all institutional sectors in the strategic planning process is most often linked to the combined effort of the vice-chancellor and the chair or head of the strategic planning committee (henceforth referred to as the ‘strategic planner’). Commitment of the vice-chancellor to the strategic planning process, as we have noted, is key to achieving success. Nonetheless, it is very difficult for a vice-chancellor to drive the process. That usually falls to the strategic planner and the strategic planning committee. In this regard, the role and composition of the institutional strategic planning committee, which may be chaired by the vice-chancellor, are crucial. The strategic planning committee must include senior management (usually the deputy vice-chancellor of finance and someone involved in institutional research or data management), respected



senior members of the teaching staff, senior staff, students and representatives of the alumni or community, if appropriate to the institution. The council should be briefed regularly about the progress and direction of the strategic planning committee.

Notes

Endnotes

- 1 Porter, M. 1996. *Harvard Business Review*, November-December, 1996. p. 61.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Jones, D. 1996. *Linking Planning with Budgeting*. Boulder, Colorado: NCHEMS. pp. 1–5.
- 4 See Mahoney, R.I. 1997. 'Reinventing the University: Object Lessons from Big Business'. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 17 October 1997.
- 5 Ramashala, M. 2000. 'Repositioning the University of Durban-Westville'. Vice-chancellor's address to the University Assembly, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.

- 6 This guide is intended for any leader of a higher education institution – a president, vice-chancellor, rector or principal, depending on the structure of the institution. We use the term vice-chancellor throughout the text to avoid having to list all the possibilities. However, we want to make it clear that we are referring to any of these institutional leaders. We also note that this guide is intended for use by deans, department chairs or directors in their strategic planning efforts either as part of an institutional process or alone.
- 7 Mintzberg, H. 1994. 'The Fall and Rise of Strategic Planning'. Harvard Business Review, January/February. p. 109.
- 8 The National Universities Commission (NUC) was legally established in 1974 to function as a buffer between government and the higher education institutions, with responsibilities for advising government on policy issues, setting norms for quality assurance, channelling block grants from government to the universities, and overseeing the balanced and co-ordinated development of the system.
- 9 Maki, P. L. 2002. 'Assessment: A Shared Commitment'. American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) website: <http://www.aahe.org/assessment/assessmentplan.htm>.
- 10 Adapted from Hafner, K. 2000. 'Strategic Planning Workshop'. Berkeley, USA. Office of the President, University of California. Website: <http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/businit/presentations/connect/sld33> (2002).
- 11 University of Pretoria. 2002. Pretoria, South Africa. Website: <http://www.up.ac.za/history/vision.html>.
- 12 ML Sultan Technikon. 2002. Durban, South Africa. Website: http://www.mlsultan.ac.za/About/Mission_Vision/body_mission_vision.html.
- 13 Duke University. 2001. North Carolina, United States. Website: <http://www.planning.duke.edu/mission.html>.
- 14 Adapted from Hafner, *ibid*.
- 15 Adapted from Hafner, *ibid*.
- 16 University of Fort Hare. 2002. Alice, South Africa. Website: <http://www.ufh.ac.za/vision.asp>.
- 17 Peninsula Technikon. 2002. Bellville, South Africa. Website: <http://www.pentech.ac.za/ourmission.asp>.
- 18 University of Maryland. 2002. 'Building on Excellence: The Next Steps. The Strategic Plan'. College Park, Maryland, United States. Website: http://www.inform.umd.edu/provost/Strategic_Planning/Plan.html.
- 19 University of Durban-Westville. 2002. South Africa.
- 20 Duke University. 2001. North Carolina, United States. Website: <http://www.planning.duke.edu/mission.html>.
- 21 Makerere University. 2002. '5.6 Makerere Mission Statement'. Kampala, Uganda. Website: <http://www.makerere.ac.ug/innovations/opportun.html>.
- 22 University of Michigan. 1997. The University Record.
- 23 ML Sultan Technikon. 1999. 'Strategic Framework for Transformation'. Durban, South Africa.



- 24 'Council' is the term used to refer to higher education institution governing boards in South Africa. It is the equivalent of a board of regents or trustees in the United States. This term is used throughout the guide.
- 25 Jones, D. 1996. Linking Planning with Budgeting. Boulder, Colorado: NCHEMS. pp. 3–4.
- 26 *Ibid.*



Stages Involved in the Strategic Planning Process

Stages of the Strategic Planning Process

What Strategies Help Maximise Chances for Successful Implementation of the Strategic Plan?

When is the Strategic Planning Process Complete?

Conclusion



We have divided our discussion of the strategic planning process into eight stages. Each of them includes several steps to be taken as you proceed.

Stages of the Strategic Planning Process

Stage 1: Getting started

	Stage 1:	Getting started
	Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
	Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
	Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
	Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
	Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
	Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
	Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

Getting the strategic planning process off to a good start takes careful preparation by the vice-chancellor and institutional leaders. The success of a strategic planning exercise is partly determined by the thought and preparation put into it before a formal announcement is made. This effort includes a demonstration of support from the vice-chancellor and senior management including provision of the necessary resources to carry out an effective planning and review process and a willingness to target funds for its implementation. While strategic planning should not be seen in the context of increased funding – indeed, we recommend that planning be carried out with the assumption of constant funding – it is important to demonstrate that senior management is committed to providing funds for priorities that emerge from the strategic planning process. Without such a commitment, including a willingness to reallocate funds if necessary, a strategic planning effort is futile.

There are a series of steps to be taken before the project is announced. These are outlined below.

Laying the groundwork for the strategic planning process

Before undertaking strategic planning, it is essential that the institution's leadership reaches agreement on answers to the following questions:

- Why should we undertake a strategic planning exercise?
- What value will be added?
- How will the institution benefit?
- Is there an institutional commitment to change?

If there is not a broad commitment to institutional change, then there is no reason to begin a process that, under such circumstances, is bound to be divisive, unproductive and demoralising. If the idea of change is embraced, the process is more likely to be successful.

Pre-launch consultations

The vice-chancellor will want to undertake consultations with a broad spectrum of institutional leaders representing major areas of the campus community, including the faculty, staff, students and council, *prior* to making a formal announcement regarding the launching of a strategic planning process. This consultation phase will be most successful if it involves discussions about the importance of the strategic planning exercise to the vitality, quality and future of the institution. This process is most effective if the vice-chancellor commits to an open and broad discussion of issues and potential changes that facilitate the growth of at least some priority programmes, while also indicating the potential to modify or eliminate programmes that are no longer appropriate to the institution's mission or relevant to the needs of stakeholders.

If there is *not* a broad commitment to institutional change, then there is no reason to begin a strategic planning process that, under such circumstances, is bound to be divisive, unproductive and demoralising.

It may be useful for the vice-chancellor to state at the outset that, even if major changes occur in the mission, vision and goals of the institution, it is not the intention of campus leaders to reduce the number of faculty and staff. Where staff reductions are not likely, a great deal of suspicion and fear will be dissipated if such a statement is made in conjunction with the start of the process. If staff performance issues or overstaffing are critical institutional problems, it would be advisable to carry out any planned staff reduction exercise before the strategic planning effort begins so that strategic planning does not become confused with staff reduction.

The initial conversations between the vice-chancellor and senior leaders should not be an exercise in agenda-setting, nor should they pre-empt the planning process. It is important for these consultations to provide the campus



community with a high level of comfort with the process, faith in its openness, and assurance that recommendations will be taken seriously. The message to be communicated is that effective strategic planning must focus on the current status of the institution, its environment, its mission, vision and goals for the future. Stakeholders should understand that the key goal of the process is to improve the quality of programmes, focus efforts in key areas, and prepare for an unknown future.

Prior to the start of the strategic planning process, general agreement should be reached on the time frame for the review and the scope of its efforts, which should be as broad as possible. It may be useful for the vice-chancellor to lay out his or her general vision for the institution and to specify major goals. This can provide useful direction for the strategic planning committee. Nonetheless, in the end, success will depend on developing general consensus about the institution's mission, vision and goals. Such consensus may not exist at the outset, but must be an outcome if the process of strategic planning is to succeed.

Appointing the chair of the strategic planning committee

The choice of the chair or head of strategic planning is of prime importance. This individual, referred to in this publication as the 'strategic planner', can best lead the work of the committee if he or she has previously demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the institution and higher education in general, has a deep understanding of finance, and exhibits superb diplomatic and interpersonal skills. The most successful planners are seldom seen as leading the process. Indeed, their success lies in bringing people together, fostering creative ideas, encouraging hard work, brokering compromise, and creating a sense of community and common cause among the members of the strategic planning committee. The successful planner also helps foster confidence in the process within the campus community. This requires close, regular consultation between the vice-chancellor and the planner.

Appointing a strategic planning committee

Once the planner has been identified and pre-launch consultations completed, a strategic planning committee should be appointed and announced (or, if it already exists, its membership publicised and commended). The procedures for such appointments should follow the generally accepted methods for committee appointments at your institution. The process should involve broad consultation and consensus about committee membership (if this is possible) to ensure that the committee has broad campus support as well as the confidence of senior management and the council.

Duties and responsibilities associated with service on a strategic planning committee need to be made clear to committee members. Participating in regular meetings of the committee will be a must, and members will be required to assume assigned duties and responsibilities associated with committee membership.

Successful committees include representatives of all segments of the campus community, including students. Since a major focus of strategic planning will be the curriculum and academic and support programmes, the teaching and research faculty should be well represented. In addition, there should be members who are conversant with the institution's budget, with at least one member able to analyse institutional data independently. The most effective strategic planning committees are those which include well-respected members of the teaching and research staff, support staff, students and management, who are known for their fairness, thoughtfulness, originality and vision.

Announcing the strategic planning process and fostering broad support

One of the most vital moments in strategic planning is the public announcement that the process is about to begin. How the campus community views the process will be shaped to a great extent by how the strategic planning effort is initially presented to the campus community, the council, the alumni and other stakeholders. If this is done well, the process is likely to be productive, creative and invigorating, generating positive changes and setting the direction for the institution for the next five to ten years. If it is done badly, the strategic planning process may generate opposition from the outset, be seen as threatening to major stakeholders, fail to generate effective discussion of major issues, and prevent the necessary changes from being implemented. The resulting negative environment could sabotage the work of the committee.

At the beginning of the strategic planning process, it may be useful to focus on past successes, their relationship to a creative vision for the institution, the resourcefulness of the teaching and research staff, the support of the campus community, and the vision of those who planned for the future in previous planning efforts. It is important to build on these successes and use the creativity and intelligence of the campus community to create an even more effective, vibrant and successful institution. Where the past has not been as successful, it is equally important to spell this out while setting the stage for a better, more exciting future.



Stage 2: The strategic planning committee begins its work

Stage 1:	Getting started
➡ Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

Reviewing the pre-existing mission, vision and goals

The strategic planning committee begins its work by carefully reviewing the institution's mission and vision statements, and goals. If there are individuals who served on a previous strategic planning committee, one or more should be invited to one of the early meetings to discuss the progress made and challenges faced during that planning exercise. The new committee members might then consider the following questions:

- Is the existing vision a thoughtful overview of the desired future for the institution?
- Does this vision reflect the goals of the institution?
- Is the vision appropriate for the current environment of the institution and the current global context?
- How has the institution fared to date in fulfilling its mission? Has it realised its current vision and goals?
- Is the mission statement clear? Does it reflect current thinking?
- Has the institution been meeting its mission?
- What are the major successes, the most serious weaknesses, major problems that remain unresolved, and the most serious challenges?

Creating a future-oriented mission, vision and goals

The vision and mission statements and clear goals should provide the framework for the strategic plan and lay the groundwork for the future. In most cases the

existing statements will benefit from revision and the goals should reflect new needs and realities. The mission and vision set out the basic principles upon which the activities of the institution are founded.

Once the current situation has been reviewed, it is important to look at the future. Thus the committee should now consider the following questions:

- Does the mission remain appropriate given the current environment and expectations for the future?
- Is the vision statement still appropriate? Should new values be enshrined?
- Should additional goals be added?
- Is the existing curriculum appropriate for the future? Which are the areas of weakness and strength?
- How do the goals build upon institutional strengths?
- How do the goals enhance quality?
- How do the goals help the institution overcome its weaknesses?
- How do the goals relate to local, regional and national communities that are served?
- How does the environment (location, types of students, local needs) affect plans for the future?

If the mission and vision statements and goals do not seem appropriate, the strategic planning committee should begin the process of rewriting elements that do not reflect the institutions' current values, needs and intentions. The vision and mission statements will help give context to the institution's goals. It is the task of the strategic planning committee to ask how these goals compare with reality. For example, do the science goals reflect the reality of student preparation in mathematics? If not, how can they be changed, or how can the pool be enlarged?

It is important that the strategic planning committee take the time to think through the mission and vision statements and institutional goals carefully. Such a discussion can often be done more effectively during a retreat away from the distractions of the campus and the constant interruption of telephones and cell phones, if possible. Until the committee has a clearer sense of the overall vision and direction of the institution, planning will be difficult. Part of this vision will reflect the goals of the vice-chancellor, the council, the teaching and research staff, members of the academic community, students and the public. If these views are not known, they should be sought by the committee. In the end, the success of the strategic plan will depend on a high degree of consensus on the basic goals, values and priorities.



The existing mission and vision statements and goals should be reviewed in the context of the existing strategic plan. The following additional questions should be considered:

- Are the mission and vision statements and goals compatible?
- What has been achieved over the period during which the strategic plan has been in effect?
- Have the goals articulated in the previous plan been achieved?
- How can the new plan build on, or alter, the strategic direction chosen for the institution?

Assessing the current state of the institution

Part of the process of self-assessment carried out by the committee should focus on the current 'state' of the institution. The committee should assess the following:

- Where is the institution at present in terms of achieving its long-range goals?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the various programmes?
- How can current challenges be met?
- Is the institution on target in terms of the time frame set for internationalisation?

Central to the review will be an assessment of the status of the institution in terms of its current mission, vision and goals. This review (as noted in the previous section) is intended to organise thinking about the institution as it relates to past, present and future institutional goals. It should provide an opportunity to assess the clarity and effectiveness of the current mission, vision and goals, their links to policy and programmes, and their effectiveness in the current environment. Clearly crafted and contextually effective institutional vision and mission statements and goals are critical to the success of these programmes. A review of the current situation is essential to effective thinking about the needs of the future.

Seeking consensus on the goals, process and time-frame covered by the plan

General agreement should be reached early in the process about the overall direction of the strategic planning process, the approach and strategies to be utilised by the committee, and a time frame for completion. Assurances should be provided about broad consultation with stakeholders, public discussion of recommendations and opportunities for discussion of the final report in draft form. It is important that consensus be obtained about the work of the committee and the aims of the process. The committee should:

- stress its openness to input from interested individuals and groups;
- emphasise its commitment to transparency regarding outcomes; and
- assure the campus and the community that there is no hidden agenda.

Creating an infrastructure for successful strategic planning

The strategic planning committee must have adequate staff support for arranging and supporting strategic planning retreats and regular meetings; gathering and preparing data; obtaining records essential to effective deliberations; making appointments for consultations with administrators, staff, students, council members and key community leaders; and ensuring ongoing support in preparing draft conclusions, sector reports and the final document. Most institutions have a strategic planner and a planning office. If there is no such position, one should be established for the strategic planning process, and beyond. The planning office needs an adequate budget in addition to dedicated staff support.

The staff should report to the chair of the strategic planning committee, not to some other administrator. This is essential for effective committee operation, and for giving people confidence in the committee. It also ensures that staff do not have divided loyalties. While the staff may be seconded from some other unit, their reporting line must be to the leadership of the strategic planning process if the committee is to do its work adequately. Staff seconded on a part-time basis from the vice-chancellor or registrar's offices may have conflicting loyalties in both time and focus. That seldom leads to effective support for the planning process.

Data collection and analysis for strategic planning

The collection and analysis of baseline institutional data is crucial for the success of the strategic planning process. Some of this research can be carried out before the formal review begins so that participants have access to all the necessary information to work effectively and reduce meeting times.

The basic financial data on income and expenses are central to this effort. Other essential data include:

- student enrolment information (head count and FTE);
- student pass rates;
- dropout and graduation rates by year;
- staff size;
- distribution by age and rank of staff;
- staff recruitment and loss patterns (including reasons for losses such as illness, retirement, outside job offers, return to study);



- staff vacancies over the past five years by classification; and
- research output over the last five to ten years.

The above are examples of the types of data needed. Data requirements will be dictated by the type of institution and the needs of its programme.

A well-organised and comprehensive database is crucial for effective planning. Without the necessary data, the results are unlikely to reflect fiscal and institutional realities and will therefore be of little use for the process. For example, enrolment data will help the strategic planning committee assess student enrolment patterns, as well as dropout and graduation rates. These numbers have implications for income, housing and staffing needs, among other things. Failure rates will be reflected in income losses from state funding (50 per cent of the subsidy under the current South African Post-Secondary Education formula)¹ – a cost that must be taken into consideration when doing long-term planning. Similarly, a review of data on staff gains, losses, promotions and benefits is essential to effective planning. Questions to consider at this point include the following:

- Is there a bulge in staff age groups, suggesting that a disproportionately high number will be retiring at a certain time? If so, how is the institution preparing for it?
- Are the losses of teaching and other staff exceeding recruitment gains and how does this affect staffing targets?
- Are staffing shortfalls confined to certain areas (for example, economics, computer science and information technology) or spread more broadly across the institution?
- What is the strategy for dealing with staffing shortfalls?
- Might the institution consider training some of its own promising students or staff in these areas?
- Who are the institution's main competitors for attracting employees? Are they other local higher education institutions, business, government or international organisations?
- Why are people leaving? Are they leaving for better working conditions or higher salaries and benefits? Do the patterns reflect normal attrition as people take advantage of other life opportunities? In short, is this a problem that needs attention during strategic planning, or is it the kind of turnover that is normal?

An effective strategic planning process identifies and addresses issues such as these in the course of examining the current state of the institution and assessing its likely condition five, ten or more years into the future.

Trend analysis should form part of the data analysis carried out in preparation for the strategic planning process. Much of the institutional data will fluctuate over time. Recruitment of staff, for example, is often uneven on a year-to-year basis and seldom meets targeted levels in the short run. But the picture of staffing levels should be clearer if looked at over a five- to ten-year period, as should the potential for long-term problems or successes in recruitment. Graphing the trends over five-, ten- and 20-year periods makes it more accessible to those who may not be particularly familiar with budgets or quantitative institutional data.

Institutional strategic planning framework



Conducting a SWOT analysis

Early in the strategic planning process it is important for the strategic planning committee to spend time reviewing the overall situation of the institution. A useful way to do this is to undertake what is called a SWOT analysis – an examination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the institution. Typical SWOT analysis questions include the following:

- What are the strengths of the institution?
- Do stakeholders value what the institution does?
- What are the best programmes, outstanding disciplines, most successful areas of research and other special features of the institution? How can the institution build on these as it plans for the coming decade?
- What are the current weaknesses of the institution?
- Which of the programmes are less successful? Should unsuccessful programmes be eliminated or could they be turned into high-quality programmes? What makes most sense in the current context?
- Are there special opportunities the institution could build upon in the future?
- Do institutional strengths provide opportunities?
- Is the location of the institution one that could be used to better advantage?
- Are there threats in the external environment that could prevent the institution from achieving success?

While focusing on weaknesses is difficult, it is important to make hard choices about those aspects of the institution that should retain support and those that should not. The level of success is one measure to be used. In most cases, people in marginal or failing programmes know the unit is weak. If it is apparent that a programme that is central to the institution's mission has been assessed as weak, the staff may be receptive to ideas that will strengthen the programme. If the decision is to close the programme, faculty and staff in that programme may be willing to consider retraining, early retirement, or seeking a position elsewhere. No institution has all the resources it needs. Channelling resources to priority areas is essential. If an underperforming area is an essential one, this is the time to figure out how to make the changes needed to strengthen it.

Taking advantage of a special location is another consideration for an institution. In an agricultural area, for example, an institution might build on programmes that will help local farmers. South Africa provides several examples of institutions that have taken advantage of their locations. The University of Fort Hare set a priority goal to expand its agriculture school to take advantage of its rural location and help strengthen the agricultural economy of the region. Similarly, the University of the Witwatersrand, with its Johannesburg location, focused on how it could use its urban setting to help rebuild the decaying city around it, and changed its goals accordingly. ML Sultan Technikon (now the Durban Institute of Technology) built on its successful and well-regarded hotel and chef school to take advantage of South Africa's growing tourist industry by expanding its hospitality and chef programme.

It is also essential to ask whether there are threats on the horizon. Answers to the following questions about threats will help the strategic planning process.

- What, if any, threats are on the horizon?
- How can the institution plan for them?
- Does it appear that the number of qualified matric students will be smaller than desired? If it does, what plans can be made to ensure that the institution attracts enough high-quality student admissions?
- What other steps can be taken to cushion the possibility of lower enrolments?
- What are the contingency plans in case enrolments fall short of targets?

Time devoted to such assessments will pay dividends in helping the institution maximise strengths and build on the opportunities they provide. Recognising weaknesses and potential threats to success can help the institution overcome them.

Unit reviews and self-studies

Part of the process of preparing an institutional strategic plan involves a review of each unit – faculty, programme, department or school. This review is usually based on self-studies in which each unit identifies its own goals, priorities, strengths and weaknesses. The self-study should include goals for the future. It is important to stress once again the utility of the assumption of ‘constant’ funding in self-studies or defined targets (five per cent increase or decrease). Operating under these assumptions will help ensure that this process does not become an exercise in writing ‘wish lists’ which raise expectations that may be dashed if new funding is not obtained. In addition to setting out major goals, the self-studies should include a prioritisation of programmes, which, as a minimum requirement, identifies the highest priority as well as the lowest. This will help focus attention on costs and potential trade-offs. The unit self-study should be carried out in the context of institutional needs and the preferences of the unit. Student input in the self-study process is usually very helpful.

Some institutions have found it useful to invite an external reviewer to join in the self-study, or, in cases in which a unit is troubled or needs stimulation, it can be useful to ask for an outside team to carry out the entire self-study. However, bringing in external reviewers is expensive (with costs including travel, per diem, and occasionally an honorarium) and can limit the willingness of members of the unit to be candid and forthcoming with the reviewers. These are decisions that have to be considered carefully in the light of the planning budget and the conditions in the unit.

Aligning reviews and self-studies with the institutional strategic plan

Self-studies by units, programmes and faculties provide important insights and information for the strategic planning committee. They reflect the goals and aspirations of the units and, if properly executed, the strengths and weaknesses of the units. Outside reviews can provide invaluable assistance to the strategic planning process. It is important that these efforts be taken very seriously in the strategic planning process, even if the goals and aspirations of the unit can not be incorporated into the final institutional plan. The care and thoughtfulness that goes into unit self-studies and reviews will be important for mobilising support for the final institutional plan even if recommendations made at this level cannot be incorporated into the final strategic plan. Similarly, unit, programme and faculty budget projections will also provide valuable insights and information. In the course of reviewing these sub-institutional self-studies and reviews, the strategic planning committee will find it useful to think about the following:

- Programme/unit/faculty reviews provide a context for institutional plans.
- Goals must match the context of institutional priorities.
- Budgets are most useful if they fit within suggested parameters (usually the assumption of constant funding or some agreed increase or decrease, such as five per cent).
- Self-studies and reviews provide institutional planners with a delineation of institutional strengths and weaknesses, as seen from the perspective of a particular unit or those evaluating it. Units are often better at self-criticism of weaknesses than are institution-wide committees.
- Weak units, programmes or faculties are not necessarily targets for elimination. They may well be targets for improvement and growth if they fit into institutional priorities and foci or provide vital support for core activities.
- Self-studies give an indication of the direction set by units.
- In the end, there must be congruence between the goals and the final plan that emerges from the review process.

Setting strategic planning targets

One of the most critical and difficult parts of the planning process is setting final goals for the strategic plan. In general, goals will be short-term (within a year), medium-term (two to five years) and long-term (more than five years). Goal-setting efforts build on the mission and the vision for the institution. Goals are derived from the answers to the following questions:

- What is the niche of the institution? What faculties, departments, services and programmes are to be the focus for the institution in the coming years?
- What are its future centres of excellence?

- Which faculties and services will play a supporting role (both academic and human services, such as academic development)?
- Which units will be eliminated or down-sized?
- Which of the units that are currently weak will be improved so that they can provide the necessary support for the major foci of the institution?

Assigning responsibility and accountability for goal achievement

It is important to assign clear lines of responsibility and accountability, along with specific timelines for the achievement of each of the goals. A general request by the strategic planner for regular updates on the status of goal achievement will help assure that goals are met or that obstacles to goal achievement are addressed timeously.

Setting priorities for plan implementation

Establishing implementation priorities is a vital part of the strategic planning process. It is useful to identify several strategic planning goals that can be achieved quickly (for example, the implementation of bridging courses) and make them the highest priority. This will demonstrate that strategic planning can bear fruit quickly and will help sustain support for some of the often difficult long-term implementation efforts. Some high-priority goals will follow logically from the process because they follow other actions (for example, building an information-technology centre prior to making computer literacy a requirement for all graduates).

In setting priorities, it is useful to pay special attention to those areas and programmes identified as central to the niche of the institution. Appropriate questions to be addressed at this point include the following:

- Do these high-priority areas and programmes need to be enhanced or strengthened?
- Will this require a major, time-consuming effort that should be started immediately?
- Is this possible within the current budget and institutional environment?

Ensuring positive outcomes from the strategic planning process

Among the most effective mechanisms to maximise the success of the process is to guarantee financial support for some new initiatives that grow out of the strategic planning process. This will involve a decision to set aside funding to be used to encourage implementation of the new strategic planning goals and priorities. A commitment to provide funding demonstrates the seriousness of the exercise and suggests that new programmes will be funded. Even if the budget

must be cut overall, it is important to ensure that some new or expanded efforts result from the process even if it increases the reallocation required elsewhere. Vital to success are public assurances that the strategic planning process is *not* synonymous with cutting the budget. If possible, the process should at least have the assurance that constant funding will be available.

Peninsula Technikon provides an excellent example of what can be done by way of incentive funding during the strategic planning process. Vice-chancellor Figaji publicly set aside substantial funds to be accessed on a competitive basis by units for promoting projects that reflected institutional priorities in the strategic plan. This funding allowed several major projects to get under way early in the process, and thus provided an immediate demonstration of the importance and utility of the strategic planning process.

Stage 3: Compiling the final strategic planning document

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
➡ Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

It is at this point that all of the major stakeholders have been consulted, the mission, vision and goals has been revised, priorities have been set, analysis of institutional data have been completed, and relevant supporting data has been compiled. The next step is to draft the final strategic planning document. The key aspects of this process are outlined below.

Spelling out the strategic plan in detail and creating a plan of work

One of the most important tasks of the strategic planning committee is to produce a written plan for the institution as a whole, complete with mission and vision statements, goals for the future, and a *plan of work*. The plan of work needs to

include clearly defined tasks, timelines for completion, and to specify who is responsible for completing each task. In some cases more than one person will be responsible for a task. The plan of work will reflect a review of institutional data and consultation with the university community (including staff, management, students and the council).

A well-written strategic planning document will reflect the reality of the institutional environment and its effects on the budget and goals, and the hopes, aspirations and excitement generated by plans for the future. The plan will serve as a framework for engendering support, obtaining additional funding (if needed), approval and implementation. It is important to include:

- a budget that accurately reflects the costs of implementation, additions and savings, as well as actual or potential sources of additional revenue, where appropriate; and
- a thoughtful, well-developed timetable for implementation.

The plan provides benchmarks against which to measure progress, a picture of additional costs and savings that might be realised over the long term, and a guide of the changes that can be expected in the campus community. The care, sensitivity and time put into the plan will be a key to its successful implementation over the next few years.

Tying the budget to the final version of the strategic plan

A review of data from the current budget year is essential for the budget planning process of the strategic plan. The data should detail expenses and income (including a breakdown of salary costs for teaching and research staff), administrative and support staff costs, physical plant expenses, annual debt burden, and so forth. Many institutions in South Africa have used the *Cambridge Associates 5-Year Financial Planning Model*.² This model incorporates revenues and expense categories and allows planners to make projections over a five-year period based on the current institution budget. Assumptions about inflation, tuition increases, government funding, bad debt, salary increases, and so on can be altered to see how these changes affect the bottom line. Examples of the budget categories included in this model are listed below.

Revenue:

- Tuition and fees (minus bad debts)
- State subsidies
- Gifts and grants
- Investment income
- Other income



Expenditures:

- Salaries
- Fringe benefits
- Travel
- Entertainment
- Supplies
- Library
- Utilities
- Capital equipment
- Loan service
- Building and grounds
- Maintenance
- Outside services (insurance, licenses, etc.)
- Renewal and replacement (depreciation)

Cambridge Associates is but one provider of such models. There are other equivalent software programmes or one can set up a template to carry out such analysis using a standard budget programme such as Microsoft Excel.

The budget history for at least the last five to ten years is essential for successful strategic planning. While these data can be aggregated to some extent, they must be detailed enough to show trends for major categories (such as teaching staff salaries) over time. It is not enough to look back one year at a time. Such an exercise presents a limited picture and often gives an inaccurate idea of the direction of costs and income for a five-year planning period. We recommend that budget calculations be done in constant rands (naira, dollars, etc.) so that real expense and income increases and decreases can be seen clearly. Forward projections are important for successful strategic planning. It is also very useful to be able to vary the assumptions to reflect the kinds of unknowns institutions will face in the real world, such as changes in inflation rates or economic downturns that reduce government subsidies. Different scenarios for strategic planning can be set out depending on which variables you assume. This allows flexibility to be built into the strategic plan. While examining the budget in the context of the strategic plan, it is important to consider additional sources of funding that might be available in the future.

Key questions that might be examined in developing the budget include the following:

- How realistic is the strategic plan in terms of the existing budget situation?
- How will the goals of the plan be financed?

- Which priority goals and programmes will receive enhanced funding?
- Which programmes will have their budgets reduced?
- How much of the plan can be accomplished within existing budget realities?
- How much of the plan is dependent on new money?
- What source(s) of additional funding would be available, if needed?
- What long-term funding will be necessary for the implementation of the strategic plan?

Budget expenditures are seldom distributed equally over the five- to ten-year life of a strategic plan. Thus, the long-term funding requirements for the implementation of the strategic plan need to be considered carefully so that differential financial requirements can be met when they arise. The following questions can help guide thinking about a long-term budget:

- Will potential fluctuations in funding requirements have an impact on the structure of the existing budget over time?
- Will the implementation of the plan affect the current budget?
- Which goals or programmes require additional funding?
- What will be the source of this new funding?
- Should expected sources fail to materialise, what are the alternative sources of funding?

Stage 4: Publicising the plan

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
➡ Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
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Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning



Once the draft strategic plan has been completed and approved by the strategic planning committee, its circulation within the institution and among stakeholders is the essential next step in the process. While wide-spread discussion of the plan should have taken place during the process, it is vital that the final version of the plan, representing the best thinking on the campus, compromising about priorities, and a clear statement about the direction of the institution for the future, be circulated prior to its submission for final approval. This also allows the strategic planning committee to adjust the plan if objections or problems are identified at this time.

Stage 5: Getting the plan approved

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
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➡ Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

The next task is submission of the final draft of the strategic plan for approval by the relevant governance structures, such as the senate, institutional forum, management and council. If the strategic planning committee has been doing a good job of consultation along the way, and if it has operated in a transparent manner, most of the support needed should already be in place. A strategic plan is not something that can be imposed on an institution. The campus community must agree with its goals and aims, understand the foci, agree with the priorities, and be committed to putting in the time and energy believed to be necessary for it to succeed.

Stage 6: Implementing the plan

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
➡ Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

The strategic plan has been completed and approved. Now comes the vital task of implementing it. Hopefully you have been able to start the implementation process during the planning period by realising some of the short-term goals identified early in the process and about which there was general consensus. In the process of developing the final plan you will have prioritised the major goals, which will now help order the implementation process. Realisation of many of the goals will be the province of individual programmes, faculties and departments. They will be delighted to know that their preferences have been approved. While they bear the major responsibility for implementation, the strategic planning committee, aided by senior management, can often facilitate the process.

As implementation moves forward, it is important to keep the campus community informed of progress. Publicise achievements, encourage ongoing long-term efforts and work with units to help them realise their goals. At the institution level, it is especially vital to insure that the process moves forward, to check the plan from time to time, to remind those responsible for particular items what needs to be done, and to provide all the help the strategic planning committee can to those who need extra assistance. Periodic encouragement from the vice-chancellor and other senior administrators is also vital during the implementation process.

Publicise and celebrate successes along the way.

Stage 7: Monitoring and evaluating the strategic plan

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
➡ Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the strategic plan
Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

It is important for the strategic planning committee to create and integrate a review and evaluation process soon after approval of the final plan. It should involve members of the institution's council, management team, senate, faculties and other stakeholders. The review and evaluation should be supervised by the strategic planner and his or her strategic planning office. It will be important to insure that the office continues to have sufficient staff to monitor progress effectively and to foster new support or suggest changes if this becomes necessary. Among the tasks and strategies that should be considered are the following:

- a periodic review of the goals, timetables, benchmarks and performance indicators in the context of progress made versus progress expected (a sample list of benchmarks for strategic planning can be found in Appendix B);
- a periodic reassessment of the institutional environment (for example, rates of inflation, expected and actual budget allocations, results of graduates);
- regular consultations with the campus community to ascertain their views on the progress made to date as well as their concerns so that problems can be resolved at an early stage;
- maintenance of an open review process that includes making regular progress reports to the campus community;
- suggesting and making changes if progress is not being made;
- maintaining flexibility; and
- establishing good management information systems to support the ongoing review and monitoring of the data.

Stage 8: Institutionalising strategic planning

Stage 1:	Getting started
Stage 2:	The strategic planning committee begins its work
Stage 3:	Compiling the final strategic planning document
Stage 4:	Publicising the plan
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Stage 6:	Implementing the plan
Stage 7:	Monitoring and evaluating the plan
➡ Stage 8:	Institutionalising strategic planning

In the long run, the strategic planning process should be integrated into the institutional culture. Strategic planning should become second nature to on-going planning in all units. People should expect that attention will be refocused on the strategic plan at periodic intervals. The following steps can be taken to help institutionalise the process:

- Provide for a continuation of the strategic planning committee even if it meets only periodically.
- Maintain a strategic planning office with a permanent staff (support staff at a minimum) and a strategic planner. It is also useful to continue to have a viable strategic planning committee with representatives from major sectors of the campus community.
- Continue to collect data, both to monitor progress and to prepare for the next planning process. Computerised management systems are often vital for success.
- Keep documentation from previous efforts so that future planners do not have to repeat work already completed. Allow the next strategic planning effort to build upon previous work and lessons learned. Publicly consult with some members from the past strategic planning committee as you begin the next planning effort if there are no veterans on the new strategic planning committee.
- Continue to review the strategic plan on a regular basis, adjusting to changes in funding, needs, priorities and the environment.



- Begin to collect useful information, data and ideas for future formal strategic planning exercises, which should take place in five- to eight-year intervals.

What Strategies Help Maximise Chances for Successful Implementation of the Strategic Plan?

Start the implementation process with short-term goals that can be carried out while the process of planning is under way (such as implementation of bridging courses), then publicly acknowledge these successes.

There are a number of actions and strategies that will facilitate successful implementation of the strategic plan once it is approved. They include the following:

- Start the implementation process with short-term goals that can be carried out while the process of planning is under way (such as bridging courses), then publicly acknowledge and mark achievements.
- Clearly lay out the goals and the policy for implementation.
- Set up a realistic timetable that delineates priority short-term goals.
- Set up a timetable that differentiates short- and long-term goals and begin work on recognising their time parameters.
- Designate and delegate lines of responsibility and accountability for each of the goals.
- Relate the institutional budget (and budget process) to the plan with careful calculation of additional costs and comparable savings to ensure that implementation can take place within existing budget parameters.
- Outline each of the tasks required of each major goal and create timelines and expectations of performance. Including management in this process will help to ensure support.
- Work closely with the individuals and units most clearly affected by the changes envisioned, including those being down-sized or eliminated, thus minimising problems and maximising the chances for success.
- Publicise and celebrate successes along the way.
- Monitor progress, both in achieving goals and against important benchmarks along the way.
- Be prepared to rethink major aspects of the plan if progress does not meet expectations. Do not hesitate to make changes to the planning process if necessary.

- Listen carefully to individuals who see potential flaws in the plan as it is implemented. Make corrections if necessary.
- Think through major potential problem areas and develop contingency plans for the most likely hurdles or difficulties.

Be prepared to rethink major aspects of the plan if progress does not meet expectations. Do not hesitate to make changes in the planning process if necessary.

When is the Strategic Planning Process Complete?

In reality, the strategic planning process is never completely finished. Indeed, if strategic planning is to succeed in the long run – if it is to reward the long hours of thoughtful planning, discussion, compromise and agreement – it must be institutionalised, ongoing and begun again at five- to ten-year intervals. A target date for beginning the development of a new plan can be set at the conclusion of the current strategic planning process. Try to ensure some continuity in the ongoing strategic planning structure so that the review process benefits from previous efforts and from any mistakes that might have been made in the past.

Conclusion

Establishing and sustaining an outstanding institution of higher education, in whatever niche chosen, results from a combination of many factors, among which are the quality of the teaching and research staff, institutional leadership, financial support, the quality and commitment of the students, and a supportive environment. Yet, in the long run, little of this matters unless it is accompanied by careful, creative, realistic planning. For most institutions, this will grow out of an effective strategic planning process, carried out in a thoughtful, open, participatory manner and resulting in a plan that has the support of the campus community and most, if not all, of the institution's stakeholders.

In the preceding pages, we have attempted to suggest approaches, methods, strategies and tools to enhance the prospects of success and to guide you – both newcomers and veterans – through the strategic planning process. We wish you well in what should be an exciting, creative and fruitful journey.





Two Case Studies: South Africa and Nigeria

South Africa's National Framework

Nigeria's National Framework



South Africa's National Framework

Major Provisions

In South Africa, a new national framework for higher education was approved and spelled out in the Education White Paper 3¹ and the Higher Education Act of 1997. Both have broad implications for strategic planning at institutions of higher education nation-wide. The provisions of the Higher Education Act fall into three broad categories:

- justice and equality;
- responsiveness to the needs of the society; and
- co-operative governance.

An elaboration on each of these provisions is found below.

Justice and equality

The new framework is designed to meet the educational needs of South Africa through significantly changed national economic, social and political structures.² It seeks to guide fundamental changes in higher education to correct, redress and overcome the legacies of apartheid, so that higher education becomes more socially equitable and promotes social justice more generally. The government makes a commitment to 'equity, justice, and a better life for all'.³ The White Paper stipulates greater efficiency in terms of student throughput and output rates and in terms of the success rates of black students.

Social responsiveness

The national framework seeks responsiveness to address societal interests and needs by producing graduates who are equipped to participate in a globally competitive economy, enabling them to contribute to the reconstruction and development needs of society. Specifically, the White Paper calls for shifting enrolments towards science/technology and career-oriented fields and programmes, and urges the growth of basic and applied research within the framework of a national research plan.

Co-operative governance

The framework further seeks to encourage co-operative institutional governance, which recognises that no single stakeholder constituency can affect change in an institution, and enhances the role of the national government through the Ministry of Education and the Council on Higher Education (CHE).⁴ The White Paper urges the recognition of complimentary and competing interests on campuses and, on this basis, the creation of internal institutional structures of

governance (such as institutional forums) that reflect and promote broad institutional participation, transparency, co-operation and a democratic ethos.

Overview of the Framework

The new framework was a product of both the struggle to transform higher education, ridding it of the legacies of apartheid, and an effort to prepare South Africa to compete effectively in a highly competitive globalised economic and political environment. It was built on years of struggle, thoughtful study, extensive planning and consensus-building.

Higher education is expected to promote modernisation through internationally competitive research and high-quality programmes. There is an emphasis on the commitment to high academic standards throughout the system, both to increase international competitiveness and to ensure that the disadvantaged institutions of the past do not continue to have second-class status. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are to be protected.⁵ Accountability is seen to require a much more active role for government than in the past, putting special responsibility on government and the new CHE.

These changes are to be implemented within a new single co-ordinated system.⁶ The CHE is to play a central role in this new single system to replace 15 autonomous structures higher education's role in providing a better quality of life for the country and its citizens. It is also regarded as key to establishing effective democracy at the national and institutional levels.⁷

A new approach to planning is elaborated in the document: a programme-based approach is to be built into institutional strategic and budget plans.⁸ The White Paper calls for the development of a national strategic plan, the creation of which would largely fall to the CHE. This master plan was intended to establish an 'integrated and co-ordinated' framework for the whole higher education system.⁹

The governance structure is to be fundamentally changed. The new framework calls for a co-operative arrangement of governance between government and the institutions. Government is to be 'proactive' to ensure that desired changes occur, but with no intention to 'micro-manage' institutions.¹⁰ Part of the centralising function is to be provided by the CHE, which is to work closely with both government and the institutions. At the campus level, the functions of the senate are maintained while student, staff, and community participation is guaranteed through *institutional forums* designed to democratise higher education and give the public opportunities for input and co-operation on an 'advisory' basis in the context of the existing authority of the council, administration and senate.¹¹

Institutional strategic plans would be expected to reflect the principles and context of the new higher education framework spelled out in the White Paper. This would require including:



- policies to promote equity in admissions;
- new opportunities for disadvantaged students and mechanisms to improve their chances of success;
- plans that encourage greater focus on science and technology;
- a means for greater participation in governance and transparency within the campus community, focus on improving the quality of academic programmes, research and service; and
- plans that reflect the need for economic and political development, both locally and regionally.

Nigeria's National Framework

Nigeria's higher education system has been in a state of crisis since 1996, owing to a series of military coups, which resulted in the neglect of higher education. The return to democratic government has brought some degree of improvement for higher education and resulted in a number of changes, and proposed changes, for the system. These have implications for institutional strategic planning.

The higher education system in Nigeria 'attained its greatest distinction in the mid-1970s [when] the quality of staff and students, as well as of instruction at both undergraduate and graduate levels, compared with the top universities anywhere in the world. From that point, however, a combination of factors precipitated a decline which saw the universities deteriorate to such an extent that most barely functioned.'¹²

The decline in higher education coincided with the prolonged periods of military rule when the universities lost their autonomy and were, in terms of governance, often reduced to the status of political pawns. Authority was concentrated in the National Universities Commission (NUC),¹³ but major decisions, including the appointment of vice-chancellors, were often dependent on approval of the military government or head of state. Many institutions acquired notoriety for corruption and poor administration, and were faced with the problems of deteriorating quality, diminishing student access, inadequate funding, and poor governance and management. As Professor Munzali Jibril, executive secretary of the NUC, noted in an address to the African Donors Education Association (ADEA) during the 1990s, enrolments grew faster than budgets, forcing expenditures per FTE down from \$700 in 1991 to \$362 in 1998. Frequent changes in government policies during the previous two decades resulted in instability and weakened management, deterioration of staff salaries, labour and student unrest, a brain drain and a deficit of over 24 000 staff.¹⁴

Nigerian universities were also affected by the deterioration and breakdown of the national infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications and the electrical

supply. For example, frequent power blackouts and lack of 'electric power back-up supply [has meant that] computing facilities, limited as they are, are periodically inoperable'.¹⁵

Under the new democratic dispensation following the elections, the government has set about revitalising the higher education system. The government restored some measure of university autonomy in 2000, and the funding system is being reconceptualised. The NUC has just completed its second series of audits of academic programmes and ranking of universities.¹⁶ Among the most important changes are:

- the reconstitution of all university governing councils with more representative membership;
- the elimination of the former privilege that allowed vice-chancellors to select ten per cent of each year's student intake; and
- major increases in government funding of almost 200 per cent, bringing the per-student allocation up to \$970.

The new government's policy on autonomy for universities, announced in July 2000, creates opportunities for improving the management and quality of higher education for students. It is also intended to weaken the power of the NUC, strengthen university councils, give university senates power over curriculum matters, return the right of admission to universities, and provide block grants to individual universities. A government White Paper and legislative proposals are expected at the end of 2002.

The government faces the immediate task of re-engineering the system from the ground up, and to this end the government and the NUC have identified a set of priorities for individual universities that includes:

- rehabilitation of physical facilities;
- re-equipment of laboratories and libraries;
- re-establishment of good governance and management;
- staff development and training, particularly at institutions abroad; and
- recruitment of external funding.

These priorities, together with evolving policies, constitute the national educational framework for strategic planning for individual institutions in Nigeria and set the stage for rebuilding higher education and high-quality education opportunities for the population. Although the outlines of a new foundation have been set out for higher education by the Nigerian government, fundamental details affecting the powers of the NUC and decentralisation of power to the institutions remain ambiguous. While the goals of rebuilding the quality of Nigerian higher education are clear and can be reflected in institutional strategic



plans, there remains a great deal of ambiguity about overarching goals, funding opportunities, and the effects of the proposals to decentralise NUC authority. This makes effective institutional strategic planning very difficult. In the long run, success depends very much on the quality and effectiveness of individual institutional strategic plans and their ability to tie their visions and goals to the realities of funding and a new national framework. In the short run, contestation about the power to control the institutions remains a major stumbling block hindering the potential for success.

Endnotes

- 1 Department of Education. 1997. *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation*. Pretoria. All references to the White Paper hereafter refer to the Education White Paper 3.
- 2 Section 1.0, p. 1
- 3 Section 1.6, p. 3.
- 4 The CHE currently has 20 members. Thirteen (including the chairperson) are appointed by the Minister of Education from various constituencies with expertise on higher education; seven are ex-officio members appointed by the Minister. The CHE is seen as an independent expert statutory body rather than one that is representative of organisations, institutions or constituencies.
- 5 Sections 1.23, 1.24 and 3.33, pp. 7 and 35.
- 6 See section 1.2, p. 1.
- 7 Sections 1.19, 1.4–1.6, 1.18, pp. 2, 3, and 6.
- 8 Section 2.5, p. 10 and section 2.9, p. 12.
- 9 See section 2.23, p. 17.
- 10 The governance section is laid out in great detail. The Ministry is trying to clarify its authority to control the system in an overall policy sense, but also guarantee institutional autonomy within the vision and framework set out in the White Paper. See especially p. 17.
- 11 See sections 3.36 and 3.37, p. 36.
- 12 Hayward, F.M. and Gana, A.T. 1995. 'The Policy Framework: Management and Governance'. Unpublished report to the World Bank, April 22, 1995.
- 13 The National Universities Commission (NUC) was set up with an appointed Commission designed to be the governing body of the NUC. However, the Commission was disbanded in 1992 and has not been reappointed. The current lack of accountability of the NUC apparently suits some people. Commission members were appointed by the government and included representatives from the ministries of Education, Health, Finance and Establishment, plus representatives from the public and private sectors, and representatives of eight academic disciplines.
- 14 ADEA Working Group on Higher Education. 1999. 'WGHE Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria'. Report, December 1–3, 1999.

- 15 Moja, T. 2000. 'Education Sector Analysis. Nigeria'. Unpublished report to the World Bank, January 2000.
- 16 National Universities Commission. 'Ranking of Nigerian Universities according to Performance of their Academic Programmes in the 1999 and 2000 Accreditation Exercise'. Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities, volume 1, 2001.



A P P E N D I X



*Benchmarks for
Strategic Planning*



The following checklist is designed to help monitor the progress of the strategic planning process. The order of completion may vary by institution and circumstances.

Benchmarking Checklist

Task	Date completed
1. Pre-launch consultations completed	_____
2. Strategic planning committee (structure) established and chair appointed	_____
3. Inauguration of the strategic planning process and numerous public announcements made	_____
4. Strategic planning committee appointed	_____
5. General campus awareness of the planning process achieved	_____
6. Input invited into the planning process from various constituencies on campus	_____
7. Strategic planning data collection and analysis started	_____
8. SWOT analysis completed	_____
9. Current state of the institution assessed	_____
10. Current institutional vision, mission and goals reviewed	_____
11. Institutional mission, vision and goals revised or created	_____
12. Consensus about goals, process and time-frame achieved	_____
13. Unit reviews and self-studies begun	_____
14. Unit reviews and self-studies completed	_____
15. Strategic planning goals and targets set	_____

16. Responsibility for each plan goal assigned _____
17. Priorities and timetable for plan implementation set _____
18. Plan of work completed _____
19. Strategic plan and budget linked _____
20. Final strategic planning document compiled _____
21. Final strategic plan publicised _____
22. Understanding of strategic planning goals within the institution demonstrated _____
23. Community awareness of, and support for, new directions for the institution demonstrated _____
24. Strategic plan approved _____
25. Implementation of the plan formally begun _____
26. Fund-raising efforts for major goals formally begun _____
27. General participation in the implementation of the plan demonstrated _____
28. Achievement of short-term goals documented and celebrated _____
29. Strategic planning process institutionalised _____
30. Monitoring and review of strategic planning under way _____

