Strategy and Leadership

Introduction

Changing economic, social, and political environments are forcing higher education leaders to face new realities and challenges. In these turbulent times, universities and colleges must have strong leaders who are accountable for their organization’s performance and results. An organization’s success, and in some cases its viability, depends on the clarity of its leaders’ direction and strategy. Many management experts say that creating effective strategy is the most important responsibility of senior executives. “Can you summarize your organization’s strategy in 35 words or less? Would your colleagues express it the same way?” Very few leaders can honestly say yes to those simple questions. Yet, Harvard Business School’s David Collis and Michael Rukstad say that organizations with a clear, concise strategy—one that employees and stakeholders can easily internalize and use as a guiding light—are often the most successful in their industry. Collis and Rukstad cite Edward Jones’ strategy as an example: Jones aims to “grow to 17,000 financial advisers . . . (from 10,000 today) by offering trusted and convenient face-to-face financial advice to conservative individual investors who delegate their financial decisions, through a national network of one-financial-adviser offices” (David J. Collis and Michael G. Rukstadt, “Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?” Harvard Business Review, April 2008).

An organization must strategically plan its purpose and functions. The question “What is our value for our customers?” is as important for the not-for-profit institution as it is for a business. What is the “market” for this organization, not only at the present time, but also in the years immediately ahead? A key task of leaders is not to predict the future, but rather to give the organization direction and goals and the strategy to reach those goals (Managing for the Future, Peter F. Drucker, 1993). In other words, the leader looks ahead to where the organization should be and envisions how to get there. Strategy defines where the institution wants to be in the future. For higher education, strategy addresses: What services will be provided in the future? Strategic planning identifies ways to make strategy operational by addressing: How will these services be provided? Where will they be provided? To whom will they be provided?

Strategy is a decision-making and accountability framework for higher education boards, leadership, administrators, faculties, staff, and other stakeholders, and must encompass policies, planning, and communication. At the college or university level, strategy must span all aspects of an institution—academics and research, administration, finance, and operations. Strategy is only successful if the entire organization uses it as a guide for growth and development. Management implements long-term strategy with day-to-day, or operational, decision-making. Similarly, strategy at an organizational or unit level must be an overarching guide to all operations. Strategy includes:

- Identifying issues
- Establishing directions and priorities, which are used to develop policies and guide decision making
- Strategic planning, which addresses how services will be provided
- Strategy execution, including delegating clear responsibilities to managers
- Structuring and allocating resources
- Monitoring and evaluating of overarching goals and management operational goals
- Using strategic performance measures
- Being accountable for results

Decision Making Leading to Identifying Strategy Issues

A college’s overall strategy must address its facility and technology infrastructure, which creates a sense of place for the institution, its students and alumni. Facilities are physical representations of an institution’s identity and reinforce a sense of community and are central to the educational mission of the institution. Facilities support learning. The amount of daylight in a classroom can have a measurable effect on learning outcomes. Architectural space design can create an environment that encourages small group interaction.

While a college’s facility and technology infrastructure is a substantial asset, the infrastructure is expensive—to operate, maintain and repair. Considerable amounts of money are necessary just for the basics of keeping the lights and computers powered. Changing the ways facilities operate, renovating or updating existing classrooms and labs, building new buildings, and updating the technology infrastructure require large, ongoing investments. For these reasons, implementing effective strategy that is embraced campus-wide by administrators and academics is an important function of the facilities manager.

Many factors, including institutional control, size, and leadership, affect the strategies that are available to higher education leaders at the institutional or departmental levels. Institutional control, public, private not-for-profit, or private for-profit affects all aspects of strategy. For example, many public higher education institutions depend on state resources to construct and rehabilitate educational facilities while private institutions do not, this dependence on public funds limits both planning and execution. Similarly, state regulations in the areas of construction, human resources, and other contractual arrangements affect strategy for public institutions.

Size of institution or department affects strategy. Smaller institutions or departments frequently do not have the expertise necessary for planning and execution and may have to rely on external sources for these services. Leadership at all levels is a critical factor in strategy. The campus leader must assure that academic, facilities, finance, and other administrative strategy are in alignment. Facilities strategy that does not have the support of campus and academic leadership is not likely to yield results.

Warren G. Bennis said, “Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right.” Strategy is a decision-making and accountability framework that includes both.

Identifying Issues

As a first step in developing strategy, an institution, organization, or department must define, from a customer’s point of view, its value and the services that customers want. The analysis should focus on both outcomes and processes. Higher education institutions and departments, including facility offices, are complex organizations with multiple internal and external stakeholders. Consequently, different customers have different needs and analyses will likely result in multiple, competing needs. For example, an adult student may have a different educational goal than a student who enrolls in a college or university directly from high school. The adult may want an educational program delivered in a different way, at a different location, at a different time, and with different support services than a student who enrolls in college directly from high school. In developing strategy, colleges and universities must carefully segment customers and identify effective ways to deliver value to them. An analysis of competitors’ or benchmark institutions’ current...
strategies and forecasted changes must also be considered when identifying issues.

Institutions and other academic and administrative units should look beyond the current array of services and customers and search for “white space opportunities”; that is, areas of potential growth. Strategists believe it is essential to pay particular attention to growth areas, regardless of internal skills, so that organizations can focus on what can be rather than what is. Strategy aims to exploit the new and different opportunities of tomorrow.

Second, as a part of the issue identification process, an institution must recognize that many factors may affect its future strategy. Analyses of demographics, the economy, technology, legal and political changes, and internal policies and procedures are likely to have a substantial impact on strategy. Careful, in-depth analyses in these areas are essential for viable conclusions and decisions. Demographic changes are affecting service delivery for many higher education institutions and departments. Most strategies depend to some extent on economic factors. All higher education institutions, public and private, have been affected by the availability of state and federal funds for operating support, capital projects, and student financial aid, the level of interest rates, and the return on endowments. A greater emphasis on cost-effectiveness by reducing facilities costs and increasing services, effecting additional energy savings and addressing environmental issues are major factors in developing strategy for facilities leaders. Dramatic changes in technology have had an enormous impact on most higher education institutions in the delivery of academic and administrative services. Legal and political realities are of particular importance to public institutions that must work within these regulatory frameworks. Understanding the effect of these rules and statutes on academic and administrative functions is an important element of strategy. In addition, institutions should consider internal policy audits to determine how internal rules and regulations affect various stakeholders and strategy.

Third, an institution must analyze information to understand its current position and its competitive advantage. A thorough internal analysis of strengths and weaknesses and an accurate appraisal of the external environment of opportunities and threats (sometimes labeled a SWOT analysis, an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). As an institution, or department, completes its SWOT analysis, basic questions that must be addressed include: In what areas are the institution (or department) particularly competent? Where does the institution have competitive disadvantages? Where does the institution need human, capital, or financial resources? What are the potential new markets? Where can service and performance be improved? Which markets are deteriorating? Where is the institution losing competitive advantage? The essence of a well-formulated strategy is to maximize an organization’s strengths and opportunities and minimize its weaknesses and threats.

As a part of analyzing its current position and competitive advantage, organizations should focus on five competitive forces that shape strategy:

- The threat of new entrants
- The threat of substitute products and delivery systems
- The bargaining power of suppliers
- The bargaining power of buyers
- The rivalry within the industry

Understanding that these forces that go beyond the institution and beyond “the present environment” is valuable as organizations formulate a durable long-term strategy that is less vulnerable to competition. The job of the strategist is to understand and cope with competition, which is often defined too narrowly and limited to competition as perceived today. In reality, competition goes beyond established rivals to include other competitive forces: demands of customers, demands of suppliers, potential new entrants, and substitute products and delivery systems. Effective strategy analyzes changes in the strength of these forces, which signal changes in the competitive landscape critical to ongoing strategy formulation. (Michael E. Porter, “The Five Competitive Forces That Shape Strategy” Harvard Business Review, January 2008).

Clearly, the thorough analyses required to identify issues results in substantial information about a college or department. The challenge to the strategist is, first, to decide which data are most important, and, second, to determine if there is consensus on the results of the data analyses. It is important to agree on facts related to each issue before proposing solutions (Michael C. Mankins and Richard Steele, “Turning Great Strategy into Great Performance” Harvard Business Review, July 2005).

Analyses that identify issues are an important first step for strategy development, and these analyses are not one-time snapshots. Rather, analyses should be conducted frequently to ensure that external and internal conditions have not changed dramatically in a way that would compromise the overall strategy. Strategy can be improved with the use of continuous issues-focused strategic planning. Throughout the year, leaders should identify the issues that must be resolved to enhance performance—particularly those spanning the institution as a whole, such as responding to a new competitor or an opportunity to purchase facilities or land. Leaders should debate one issue at a time until a decision is reached and recognize that effective leaders add issues to the strategy agenda as realities change (Michael C. Mankins and Richard Steele, “Stop Making Plans; Start Making Decisions” Harvard Business Review, January 2006).

**Developing Direction and Policy**

Identifying the decisions that must be made to create value is essential. Once you have made those decisions, the traditional planning process can develop an implementation road map. They also emphasize the importance of strategy review throughout the year to give leaders the flexibility to add issues as conditions change (Michael C. Mankins and Richard Steele, “Turning Great Strategy into Great Performance” Harvard Business Review, July 2005). After issues have been identified, leaders must develop strategy and policy by developing a primary strategy or direction. Any strategy statement must begin with a definition of the objective, or the goal that the strategy is designed to achieve; it is also crucial to define the scope or domain of the business and to have a clear sense of advantage—that is, the means by which the stated objective will be achieved. They observe that defining the objective, scope, and advantage requires trade-offs (David J. Collis and Michael G. Rukstad, “Can You Say What Your Strategy Is?” Harvard Business Review, April 2008). As an example, if a college or university pursues enrollment growth, students’ experiences with small class interactions with faculty may take a back seat, and it may be necessary to rehabilitate facilities to accommodate larger classes. Similarly, if a college chooses to focus on serving recent high school graduates, it might be faced with allocating fewer resources for returning adults.

**Decision Analysis-Decision Making**

Decision analysis, or the consideration of various options that address the value of services and their impact on the organization, its people, and its resources, must be considered in shaping strategy. Peter Drucker suggests that organizations begin to make choices by asking “What do we have to do now to attain our objectives tomorrow?” He emphasizes that the most effective way to do something different tomorrow is through eliminating the no-longer-productive and the unnecessary activities. This “sloughing off” activity is critical. Drucker says that strategy that proposes doing additional new things without sloughing off old and tired ones is unlikely to have results.
His commonsense approach is to ask for each activity or process: If we were not committed to this today, would we go into it? What new and different things do we have to do today if we want to be in some particular place in the future? And when? What will not get done at all if we do not commit resources to it today? When do we have to start work on to get results when we need them? The challenge for leaders is to select a strategy and be flexible in making changes as the environment and organization changes. (Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, New York: Harper Business, 1993).

A brilliant strategy may put an organization in a strong competitive position; however, most organizations struggle with implementation, particularly when they rely on structural changes such as reorganization to execute their strategy. They emphasize the importance of ensuring that everyone in the organization knows which decisions and actions they are responsible for, encouraging higher-level managers to delegate operational decisions, making sure that important information about the competitive environment flows quickly so that leaders can identify patterns and promulgate best practices throughout the organization, facilitating information flow across organizational boundaries, and helping all employees understand how their day-to-day choices affect the organization’s outcomes.

Research shows that there are two levers that are most effective in implementing strategy:

- Clarifying decision rights—for instance, specifying who “owns” each decision and who must provide input
- Ensuring that information flows where it is needed, such as promoting managers laterally so they build networks needed for the cross-unit collaboration critical to a new strategy (Gary L. Neilson, Karla L. Martin, and Elizabeth Powers, “The Secrets to Successful Strategy Execution,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 2008).

Leaders must view strategy and execution as linked with these approaches:

1. Keep the strategy simple. Avoid drawn-out descriptions of lofty goals. Instead, clearly describe what the organization will and will not do.
2. Challenge assumptions. Ensure that the assumptions underlying long-term strategy reflect real market economics and the organization's actual performance relative to its competitors.
3. Speak the same language. All stakeholders—leaders, academic, administrative, communication, and finance teams—must agree on a common framework for assessing performance.
4. Discuss resource deployments early. Challenge departments about what resources they need and then most new them to execute their strategy.
5. Identify priorities. Delivering planned performance requires a few key actions taken at the right time, in the right way. Make strategic priorities explicit so everyone knows what to focus on.
6. Continuously monitor performance. Track real-time results against the plan, resetting planning assumptions and reallocation of resources as needed. Remedy flaws in the plan and its execution—and avoid confusing the two.

In addition, leaders should see the input and support of individuals who have institutional memory and skills necessary to successfully navigate a new idea through the system.

**Strategy Execution**

Management experts agree that a well-thought-out strategy is a crucial step; however, only solid execution will result in successful attainment of the strategy. Neilson and others surveyed several thousand employees and generated a database of 125,000 profiles representing more than a thousand companies, government agencies, and not-for-profit organizations in more than 50 countries. When asked if they agreed with the statement “Important strategic and operational decisions are quickly translated into action,” the majority answered no. In particular, employees at three of every five companies rated their organization weak at execution (Gary L. Neilson, Karla L. Martin, and Elizabeth Powers, “The Secrets to Successful Strategy Execution,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 2008).

Execution is the result of thousands of decisions made every day by employees acting according to the information they have and their own self-interest. The leader’s responsibility is to ensure that strategy is fully communicated to all employees, that all stakeholders are committed to the strategy, and that incentives—both financial and nonfinancial—are aligned with strategy. A second critical responsibility is to maintain flexibility. No one expects to formulate a strategy and follow it with no adjustments. Higher education institutions and departments operate in complex environments—economic and social changes as well as competitors’ actions call for making appropriate adjustments.

**Structure and Allocation of Resources**

An effective tool to integrate strategy in day-to-day decision making is to align and allocate resources with the strategy. Each organization's strategic plan, with its mission, goals, and objectives, should serve as the vehicle and essential foundation for funding. Some institutions present their annual budgets by aligning them with strategy. Many institutions now integrate strategy and the budget by setting aside funds for strategic initiatives. Stakeholders then present proposals designed to reach the goals identified in the plan. Another strategy is to provide rewards to organizations or individuals for their contributions in achieving results identified in the overall strategy. Some institutions use responsibility center budgeting in which the central administration delegates budgetary authority to schools or major academic programs (responsibility centers) as an effective budgetary tool.

To be effective, resources must be allocated to the goals and the strategy must identify objectives. Key questions that should be asked include: Are resources aligned with the strategy? Are resources being allocated to the areas of greater need to ensure that goals are being met? Are resources adequate? Is the resource allocation strategy sustainable?

Nonprofit organizations have no “bottom line” and are prone to consider everything they do to be critical. Consequently, they may be unwilling to say that if an action does not produce results, then maybe resources should be redirected elsewhere. Peter Drucker says that nonprofit organizations need the discipline of “organized abandonment” and should face up to critical choices. He also emphasizes the balancing problems that nonprofits’ leaders have in concentrating resources on a common goal and appropriate diversification. If a leader concentrates resources, then maximum results can be a reality. Concentrating resources is also risky, particularly if the wrong concentration has been chosen (Peter Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization*, 1990).

**Monitoring and Evaluating**

Institutions must monitor and evaluate strategy to understand if it is moving in the direction defined by strategy. Key questions include: Are the goals being achieved? Why? Why not? Are goals being achieved consistent with the proposed timelines? Why? Why not?
Are the resources adequate? Do employees understand and make decisions based on the overarching strategy? Are the goals realistic? Should the goals be altered? What are the learning outcomes? What are the other educational outcomes?

Monitoring and evaluating includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative analyses are usually determined through data analyses and comparisons with benchmark institutions. The qualitative measures are usually determined through stakeholder surveys: business and industry, students and alumni, and employees. Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses, leaders may make changes in the overall strategy at any time. These changes could be small or significant.

The frequency of monitoring and evaluation depends on the nature of the organization and the environment in which it is operating. For most organizations, monitoring is an ongoing process. Many organizations review many metrics in the form of a dashboard, balanced scorecard, key performance indicators, or other performance measurement systems. The key is to focus on trends and exceptions.

**Strategic Performance Measures**

Strategic performance measurement is now an essential part of management. The purpose of measurement is not to know how an organization is performing, but to enable it to perform better. When integrated into management decision-making, performance measurement can be a powerful tool. (Michael Hammer, "Why Leaders Should Reconsider Their Management Systems," *Leader to Leader*, 2002). Strategic measures must be combined with action steps that not only provide leaders with information on why performance is as it is, but also what changes are necessary to bring about improvement. Well-designed strategic measures focus attention on strategy and include useful information to make resource allocations, help the institution assess its progress in pursuing its strategy, and lead to an observational difference in an institution's actual behavior and performance.

Much has been written about performance measurement, and although a variety of systems are in place, all effective strategic performance measurement systems share certain characteristics:

- They integrate into decision-making
- They focus on a few desired results and measures and are easy to understand
- They lead to action
- They include well-selected and communicated measures and performance targets
- They recognize limitations

Since the overarching purpose of measurement is to enable an organization to perform better, performance measurement must be integrated into decision-making. Performance measurement should support long-term objectives and specific actions, and span multiyear planning and budgeting horizons. Strategic performance measurement should influence budgetary allocations, including hard choices about reallocations and funding high-priority items.

The desired results as defined by strategy are essential to determine which strategic measures should be used. Strategy answers these questions: How is performance for this institution to be defined? Who are the constituencies and what are the results for each of them? Is the institution effective in its core purposes of educating students and conducting research? Which goals are most important?

Strategic performance measures should identify a well-coordinated set of action steps aimed at long-term improvement. Campus leaders need to know what performance is, why performance is as it is, and what changes and resources are necessary to bring about improvement. To illustrate, most colleges measure freshman retention rates and frequently compare them with previous years’ rates and with rates for similar institutions. If a college’s rate has declined or is lower than benchmark institutions, leadership should review information that explains why the rate has declined or is low. An analysis may show that students have dropped out of college for financial reasons and that student financial aid expenditures are lower than other institutions. In this example, the college may consider a strategy of allocating resources to student financial aid to improve retention, and, then, determine the extent to which retention has been improved. Simply knowing the retention rate does not adequately inform leadership.

All performance measures and targets must include a rationale and a purpose; people must know why things are measured and, more important, what they are supposed to do about them. Measurement must be based on a careful analysis of the areas the campus controls. Only then can individuals execute the right actions to improve performance of the institution as a whole.

Selecting the measures themselves can be a formidable task. The quantity of output is not by itself an adequate measure of performance. The complexities of measuring the quality and quantity of student learning are enormous. Many benchmarks are outside of the institution, and collecting accurate and comparable performance data from other institutions, organizations, and states can be problematic. Some performance measures can be susceptible to manipulation without real changes in what they were intended to measure or reflect. Institutions must address other questions, including: Is the measure easily understandable? Against what benchmark or standard will the measure be compared with chart success or progress? To what extent is the measure reliable and valid?

Facility leaders should use quantitative and qualitative performance metrics that focus on operational and capital measures and customer satisfaction. For example, facility leaders should measure both the quantity and quality of a given space for its current use. Facilities leaders must also look at the backlog of deferred maintenance and the extent to which actions are remediating and reducing that backlog. The cost-effectiveness of custodial services and the satisfaction of students, faculty, and administrators are also important. Finally, performance must be benchmarked with similar institutions. The APPA Facilities Performance Indicators (FPI) are excellent examples of relevant performance measures for facility management departments to use in the strategy development process.

All performance measurement systems have limitations, and it is important to recognize these limitations. Education results are long term, and significant changes in areas such as graduation rates do not occur overnight. In addition, some measures are best used for internal purposes; using them externally to compare one institution with another can be inappropriate and damaging.

**Accountability for Results**

Accountability for results has become a way of life for many colleges and universities. Accountability can be an effective tool to give the institution, the department, and the individual timely and helpful information about the performance of the institution.

For accountability to be effective, a positive culture must be established and these conditions must be in place:

1. Agreement about goals
2. An improvement, rather than a negative, focus
3. An open dialogue focused on solving problems and weaknesses
4. Recognition of progress and strengths
5. A transparency and openness to review data

Ultimately, results only occur when an effective accountability system is embraced by leadership and all stakeholders within an
Strategic Planning

Simply put, strategy determines where an organization is going during the next year or more. Strategic planning outlines how an organization is going to get there and how it will know if it got there or not. The focus of a strategic plan is usually on the entire organization, while the focus of a business plan is usually on a particular product, service or program.

A variety of perspectives, models, and approaches can be used in strategic planning, depending on the organization's leadership, culture, complexity, and environment. Most plans are goals-based, focusing on strategies to achieve the goals and specific actions (who will do what and by when). Plans may span a timeline of 1 year, 3 to 5 years, or 10 to 20 years into the future.

Strategic planning is a process that helps an organization make decisions on how to achieve its strategy, including allocating its resources—financial, capital, and people. For higher education, strategic planning must address the customer: “For whom should we do it?” To determine where it is going, the organization needs to know exactly where it stands, then determine where it wants to go and how it will get there? The resulting outcome is called the “strategic plan.”

Strategic planning is making decisions today in an effort to mold the future. It builds on an organization's strengths while recognizing a changing and competitive external environment. Peter Drucker describes strategic planning as an entrepreneurial skill “aimed at action.” Strategy is about making choices: Do I serve this customer group or a different one? How are my customers and prospects changing? If my business model was good for yesterday’s customers, how does it have to change to keep them?” (Peter F. Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, New York: Harper Business, 1993).

Strategic planning is inextricably interwoven into the entire fabric of management and is a responsibility of all managers. It is an attitude, a way of life, a thought process rather than a prescribed set of processes, procedures, structures, or techniques.

In Academic Strategy, George Keller notes that “Strategic planning . . . deals with a new array of factors: the changing external environment, competitive conditions, the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and opportunities for growth. Strategic planning is an attempt to give organizations antennae to sense the changing environment. It is a management activity designed to help organizations develop greater quality by capitalizing on the strengths they already have” (George Keller, Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1983).

Drucker summarizes strategic planning as the “continuous process of making present entrepreneurial (risk-taking) decisions systematically and with the greatest knowledge of their futurity; organizing systematically the efforts needed to carry out these decisions, and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations through organized systematic feedback” (Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, 1993).

Keller identifies six features that distinguish strategic planning from other management techniques. First a college, school, or university and its leaders are active, rather than passive, about their position in history. To be strategic is to take positive, vigorous steps to overcome obstacles. It entails a belief that you can to some extent shape your own destiny as well as be shaped by external forces. Second, strategic planning looks outward and is focused on keeping the institution in step with the changing environment. Third, academic strategy-making is competitive, recognizing that higher education is subject to economic market conditions and to increasingly strong competition. Fourth, strategic planning concentrates on decisions, not on documented plans, analyses, forecasts, and goals. Fifth, strategy making is participatory and highly tolerant of controversy. Sixth, strategic planning concentrates on the fate of the institution above everything else (Academic Strategy, 1983).

Strategic Planning Principles

Certain general principles are recognized as critical for successful strategic planning. A first principle is an assessment of whether an organization is ready to embark on strategic planning. An institution should have good management and adequate information on which to base decisions before it tries to reach out and move ahead.

A second principle is willingness to assign the best people to work on the project. The distinction that marks a plan capable of producing results is the commitment of key people. A manager who says “but I can’t spare my best people now. They have to finish what they are doing before I can put them to work on tomorrow,” is a manager who does not have a plan (Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, 1993).

A third principle is that leadership’s attention, priority, and time is critical. Strategic planning cannot be delegated to the planning office. If top management becomes so absorbed in “putting out fires” and dealing with current operational problems, then the process is likely to fail. Leaders must make the most important decisions, including those affecting resource allocations.

A fourth principle is the desirability of extensive participation of employees and customers. The decision-making process is improved by involving the people on the front line who will be sources for quality and productivity gain. Encouraging participation usually means more staff "buy in," fewer efforts to sabotage the plan, and a greater likelihood of success. Also, most organizations find that many opportunities come from customers. Ben and Jerry’s number-one selling ice cream flavor is Cherry Garcia; both the flavor and name were suggested by a customer.

Finally, it is important to recognize is that there is no single perfect approach or process. Strategic planning must be designed to fit the unique characteristics of each organization.

Writing and Communicating the Plan

A plan should be written in a format and style that fits the culture and needs of the organization. Since the plans should be widely distributed to stakeholders, they must be written to appeal to these stakeholders. For example, an Executive Summary should be available. Most plans should include the following:

1. Executive Summary—The Executive Summary should be written in a style easily understandable to any internal or external stakeholder of the organization.
2. Vision, Mission, and Values Statements—These statements describe the philosophy of the organization.
3. Goals and Strategies—All major goals and related strategies should be included.
4. Appendices—Generally include the following:
   a. Operating Detail—Specifies objectives, responsibilities, and timelines for completing objectives
   b. Data Analysis –Includes information from data analyses, such as SWOT
c. Resources—Describes the resources needed (human, financial, and capital), the proposed sources of these resources, and a timeline for allocating them.
d. Performance measures—Includes quantitative and qualitative measures and timelines for evaluating progress in achieving goals

Summary

With a greater emphasis on the value of higher education, uncertain financial support, and increasing competition from other institutions and alternative delivery mechanisms, higher education leaders face mounting pressure from stakeholders—donors, boards, employees—to show results. To make the greatest possible impact, colleges and universities must focus on strategy by explicitly stating their intended outcomes and plans to accomplish those goals.

Management tools are available to assist college and university leaders to identify issues, make decisions, and measure results. Will strategy make a difference? That is the ultimate test of the effectiveness of a leader of any organization.

References and Resources


