

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

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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.



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

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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

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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

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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
Stage 5:	Getting the plan approved
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 ongoing 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.



