

Development of the Strategic Planning Process: Opportunities, Challenges, and Community Ownership

Marie T. Mora, Martin Baylor, and Veronica Gonzales

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The Importance of this Process Cannot Be Understated

- We are at a unique and historic moment – to create the **Strategic Plan** for one of the first new universities of the 21st Century!
- Our work can set the stage to shape the direction of UTRGV to allow it **achieve its potential level of excellence.**
- We can also help unify the legacy institutions **to create a truly new community**, one involving mutual trust and respect.
- We have started on the **right track** (*based on misc. SP reports*).
 - A highly credible SPC, with members known across campuses
 - Authentic representation of Stakeholders, including faculty
 - Diversity within the SPC & SPC Steering Committee
 - Commitment to communication for updates & feedback

Necessary Conditions for an Effective SP*

- Visible and committed senior leadership 😊
- A reasonable timeline (5 years is “optimal” to some experts) 😊
- Authentic faculty involvement and engagement ○
- Balanced role of Stakeholders in the SP process ○
- SWOT analyses and understanding the external environment ○
- Extraordinary efforts to communicate with Stakeholders ○
- Building trust through inclusion, transparency, and participation ○
- Flexibility, agility, and resiliency in the SP process
- Commitment (incl. resources) to implement and execute the SP
- Frequent monitoring and updates on progress

Potential Challenges*

- There are also major risks – if the SP process breaks down, the SP will not be implemented, so we need to get this right.
- In a recent AI survey of senior administrators, **only 33%** expressed confidence their current SP would be implemented.
- **More than 75%** of participants in SP programs surveyed by AI stated that ***low institutional trust*** was a significant issue.
- But establishing guiding principles/institutional values in the SP agreed upon by various Stakeholders – such as engagement, transparency, external perspectives, and resolve – can serve to ***rebuild institutional trust and a sense of community.***
- Communication, engagement, and feedback are critical.

* Adapted from Sanaghan , 2011, *Academic Impressions: Higher Ed Impact*, Academic Impressions Monograph, Denver, CO.

Sufficient Conditions to Derail the SP*

- Conflicting goals of various Stakeholders
- Stagnation, especially if SP progress is unknown
- Competing processes
- Change in administration or SP committee composition
- Lack of financial support for the SP process itself
- Unwilling/negative participants
- Skepticism
- Lack of awareness of external factors
- Failure to communicate and obtain feedback
- Failure to monitor institutional progress and make revisions
- Misalignment of budget and the SP

* Adapted from Hanover Research, 2013, *Strategic Planning in Higher Education – Best Practices and Benchmarking*, Academy Administration Practice, July 2013.

Exercise – Pre-Mortem Analysis*

- *Imagine that after a year of long and hard work, **we have failed to implement the goals** of our Strategic Plan.*
- What went wrong, and what could we have done to avoid it?
- Consider five main elements:
 1. Institutional culture (including politics)
 2. Institutional priorities
 3. Resources
 4. Stakeholders
 5. Communication

Discussion and Solutions

- **Institutional Culture (including politics)** - *At UTRGV, we have the opportunity to change the underlying culture, if we can identify how to work through the different cultures of the legacy institutions.*
- **Institutional Priorities** - *If these goals and objectives are not aligned with where the Stakeholders want to take UTRGV, this will lead to many challenges in the implementation of our Strategic Plan.*
- **Resources** - *Moving forward, we will need to address which resources are needed, and from which group of Stakeholders is the support needed, to successfully implement our Strategic Plan at UTRGV.*

Discussion and Solutions – *Cont.*

- **Stakeholders** - *We need to identify ways to ensure the support of the various Stakeholders as we move forward with our Strategic Plan at UTRGV.*
- **Communication** - *Communication is important for any institution, but it is particularly imperative for UTRGV (as a new university built on legacy institutions), as it implements its founding Strategic Plan.*