Rutgers
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Strategic Planning in Higher Education
A Guide for Leaders

Rutgers Center for Organizational Development and Leadership

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The Strategic Planning in Higher Education (SPHE) approach provides a seven-step blueprint for establishing planning priorities, guiding the process, and bringing the plan’s goals to fruition.

1. **Mission, Vision, and Values:** reviewing the organization’s guiding principles as a useful reference point for planning, especially when determining how to allocate resources and measure achievements.
2. **Stakeholder Perspectives:** identifying critical stakeholders, with particular attention to their expectations for the plan’s development and implementation.
3. **Environmental Scan and Benchmarking:** examining cultural issues, resource concerns, and other factors that may impinge on the planning process and plan.
4. **Goals:** identifying an organization’s aspirations in tangible, achievable, and measurable terms.
5. **Strategies, Priorities and Action Plans:** translating goals into a series of concrete activities and projects with appropriate timelines, and measures.
6. **Plan Creation/Implementation:** describing an organization’s strategic direction in a manner that serves to inform, influence, anchor, and guide the organization.
7. **Outcomes and Achievements:** monitoring progress and, most importantly, evaluating outcomes.

Plans fail for all sorts of reasons, but more often than not, problems arise from deficiencies in the planning process, rather than in the plan itself. Breakdowns in the process can often be attributed to short-comings in five critical process considerations:

- **Leadership** - Defining leadership roles and responsibilities and creating a commitment to the initiative.
- **Communication** - Attention to each group likely to be affected by the planning process and the plan’s goals.
- **Assessment** - Ongoing attention to assessment, guidance for developing preplanning strategies, monitoring the planning process, and judging whether a plan’s activities and strategies are successful in fulfilling the organization’s goals.
- **Culture** - Understanding the history, habits, traditions, and natural resistance to change, and taking account of this information.
- **Follow-Through** - Establishing mechanisms and methods for maintaining a public focus on the goals, strategies, and action plans, ensuring that achievements are recognized and celebrated, and consistent communication, periodic review, and accountability.
What is Strategic Planning?

While definitions of Strategic Planning differ in varying respects, most share in common the depiction of strategic planning as an intentional leadership tool for setting future organizational direction in a dynamic environment.

Tackling the Challenges of Strategic Planning

The *Strategic Planning in Higher Education* guide offers leaders of academic and administrative departments a comprehensive approach for creating, organizing, and implementing a strategic plan.

The guide provides step-by-step advice to leaders who are cognizant of the formidable challenges of strategic planning in an environment with myriad communication and organizational complexities.

Your Organization's Future

A single case study followed throughout the guide, built phase by phase, provides a comprehensive example of the planning model. Exercises and imperative-focused reminders for making the plan work, guide leaders through each step of the planning process.
“This practical field guide can serve the needs of readers from the experienced higher education planner to the newcomer who is just learning about the discipline. By carefully completing all the exercises, answering all the questions, and employing the many checklists for each phase of the planning process, a planning team is very likely to emerge with a final product that will truly strengthen the organization.”

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