Strategic Planning: Annotated Bibliography

Strategic planning is now a common (if not universal) aspect of strategic leadership at most colleges and universities. Accreditation organizations, funding agencies, and state and federal governments often insist schools have a strategic plan in place. One of the first things a new president, dean, or provost may undertake is implementing strategic planning as a means of asserting leadership and giving new direction to the organization.

Because they are sometimes poorly done or never implemented, strategic planning exercises are often derided as a poor use of time and effort. Documents take too long to prepare, may become obsolete quickly, or are not helpful in the face of changing circumstances such as financial crises. Their contents are criticized for being vague, full of clichés and buzz phrases; and they can seem interchangeable with one another, having little precise application to specific institutions, or based on budgets that are not related to reality.

Still, in a larger strategic leadership context, effective strategic planning can provide a forum for creating and implementing a campus-wide, shared sense of mission and vision; facilitate effective resource allocation and accreditation; prioritize resources; unify all campus plans so they function better in concert; and serve as a useful tool for public communication.

The following resources may guide academic leaders to lead and engage their stakeholders in effective strategic planning.

Strategic intent

Hamel, G., & Prahalad, C. K. (1989, May/June). Strategic intent. *Harvard Business Review,* 63-76.

> *When it appeared, this way of thinking about vision and strategy became popular. Rather than trim ambitions to the resources available, an organization should be ambitious and foster the desire to try to attain seemingly impossible goals and spread the goal of global leadership. A statement of strategic intent gives voice to the organization or unit's overarching ambition or "stretch targets." The statement of strategic intent should be audacious and compelling but credible; it challenges and stretches the organization; it focuses and motivates people, providing the energy for the institution's progress. The authors illustrate with examples from several companies that used four techniques to remake their strategies: build layers of advantage, search for "loose bricks," change the terms of engagement, and compete through collaboration.*

Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations

Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (2005). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations: A practical guide and workbook* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. 449 pages.

> *This is a hands-on, practically-oriented book to assist board members and staff conduct an effective strategic planning process. The book is organized around the seven stages of the planning process: getting ready; writing mission, vision, and values statements; assessing the situation; agreeing on priorities; writing the plan; implementing the plan; and evaluating and monitoring the plan. For each stage, numerous tables outline specific choices, exercises, activities and outcomes, and tasks to be undertaken. Blank worksheets, work plans, examples of sample techniques, tips for conducting focus groups, templates for plans, and assessment tools are included.*

The complete idiot's guide to strategic planning

Grensing-Pophal, L. (2011). T*he complete idiot's guide to strategic planning*. New York, NY: Penguin. 299 pages.

A straightforward, well-organized, and easy-to-follow presentation of the broad principles and practical basics for strategic planning. Sidebars titled "Missteps," "Best practices," "Definitions," and "Did you know?" make the book a useful introduction to planning. Includes a glossary, further resources, some sample plans, and sample assessment questionnaires.

How colleges can keep strategic plans on course

Fain, P. (2008, October 24). How colleges can keep strategic plans on course in a stormy economy. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *55*(9), A16. Online: https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-colleges-can-keep/10913

In an editorial commentary, Fain argues that strategic plans and planning at colleges and universities are often derided or scorned as poor uses of time and effort that quickly become obsolete, are not followed through on, take too long to prepare, or cannot respond quickly to changing circumstances (such as financial crises). Fain presents some advice from experts for effective plans: strategic plans should last no more than three to five years; and colleges must revisit the plans often, make difficult choices quickly, and stick to their stated priorities. Colleges must move quickly, develop contingencies, be flexible, make hard choices, and recognize opportunities.

Plus ça change [the more things change ...]

Fish, S. (2004, April 2). Plus ça change. *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Careers, p. 1. Online https://www.chronicle.com/article/Plus-Ccedil-a-Change/44555

In this controversial essay, a dean notes that planning is happening everywhere and addresses the paradox of strategic planning: "planning is necessary and planning won't work." That is, change will always occur, but it cannot be engineered, which is the object of planning. Change will occur independent of anyone's planning—nonetheless, one must plan to at least be close to meeting objectives. For Fish, long-range planning is not satisfactory. He advocates short-term planning along the lines of "incremental reform," which will make some achievable difference instead of making wholesale future changes. He argues that the actions of an academic leader who can monitor the environment and be flexible are more important than planning.

A practical guide to strategic planning

Hinton, K. E. (2012). *A practical guide to strategic planning in higher education*. Society for College and University Planning. 48 pages. Online: http://oira.cortland.edu/webpage/planningandassessmentresources/planningresources/SCPGuideonPlanning.pdf

This short, detailed, and concise booklet published by the Society for College and University Planning (www.scup.org) provides a step-by-step approach to the planning process. It covers the necessary components of a strategic plan, what is required to put one into practice, and how to sustain it. A practical overview of planning from the practitioner's perspective, the guide identifies the elements of a successful process. The author tries to overcome some misunderstandings about strategic planning: that it is of limited value and that it is so linear that it cannot cross organizational silos and achieve institutional transformation. The author stresses the importance of "phasing" and introduces the idea of "integrated planning." Included are checklists, templates, and sample formats.

Crash course in strategic planning

Matthews, S.A., & Matthews, K.D. (2013). *Crash course in strategic planning* Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, Inc. 97 pages.

> *As its title suggests, this brief, accessible book provides a basic overview of the basic principles and steps for the strategic planning process. Although aimed at libraries, the principles hold for higher education as well. The author takes the reader through the basic steps: mission statement, values, vision statement, forecasting, goals and objectives, activities, and organization of a plan. It includes useful examples and practice exercises.*

Strategic planning in higher education

Sevier, R.A. (2000). *Strategic planning in higher education: Theory and Practice*. Washington, DC: CASE Book. 185 pages.

> *A thorough examination of most practical and theoretical aspects of planning for higher education. This book provides highly detailed tools, methods, assessments, worksheets, example cases, and techniques for an organization to undertake a sophisticated and productive planning process. The process starts with recognizing and assessing a changing environment. Then, deeply organized chapters step through each of the key phases of the process: laying the foundation, affirming the organization's values, producing a mission statement, evaluating the internal and external environment, identifying the strategic issues, producing a strategy, and finally implementing the plan. The book stresses the importance of alignment between all the elements of the plan, and includes an extensive list for further reading.*

Additional resources

Two organizations that provide assistance and resources relevant to planning for colleges and universities are the Society for College and University Planning (www.scup.org) and the Association for Institutional Research (http://www.airweb.org/pages/default.aspx).

The journal *Planning for Higher Education* (https://www.scup.org/page/phe), published by the Society for College and University Planning, publishes articles by higher education leaders, who share their insights and analyses of trends in planning in higher education.