

## Chapter 9: Planning

### *Criterion 4*

*The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.*

### **Introduction**

In its efforts to continue a pattern of sustained excellence and to position itself for the future, Cedarville College has implemented a planning strategy that involves all divisions of the institution. Planning is essential if the institution hopes to achieve its goals and well-designed planning structures help the institution demonstrate responsible stewardship of all its assets.

### **Institutional Planning**

#### **Objective of Planning**

The objective of the strategic planning process at Cedarville College is to provide a regular, dynamic, and flexible framework in which quick reactions to change can take place. It involves the gathering of information in an effort to anticipate external environmental developments, match these external challenges with internal departmental and divisional plans, and “position” the College with appropriate priorities for the near future of one to three years.

#### **Purpose of Planning**

The purpose of the strategic planning process at Cedarville College is the successful accomplishment of the College mission through the efficient and relevant operation of each department. For the College, this results in improving the program and tailoring it to the current external environment and internal constraints. For college departments and divisions, this provides a process to help each improve what it is doing, thus enhancing their ability to contribute to the success of the College.

#### **Philosophy of Planning**

The strategic planning process at Cedarville College places emphasis upon a rationally developed understanding of the College’s purpose (mission and objectives), the environmental uncertainties (opportunities and challenges; strengths and weaknesses), and the available future alternatives (decisions, choices). Through planning, the College attempts to avoid the shackles of surprise, anticipating developments in a rapidly changing social and demographic environment.

Since the inception of a formalized planning process at Cedarville College in the late 1970's, the College administration has encouraged a philosophy-first approach. Schematically, it might be pictured this way:

*Philosophy* → *Programs* → *Personnel* → *Operations & Equipment* → *Facilities*

Rearranging this planning sequence invariably puts the proverbial “cart before the horse” and results in less defensible decisions.

The Cedarville College planning philosophy is characterized by the following attributes:

1. *Regular*

Planning efforts occur annually with a review of all departmental, divisional, and institutional plans and priorities.

2. *Comprehensive*

Planning process addresses facilities, programs, personnel, budgeting, marketing, etc.

3. *Participatory*

Planning encourages every staff and faculty member to contribute ideas and suggest innovations. This promotes a sense of ownership and consensus-building. Planning allows personnel to help create organizational vision while assisting leadership in articulating the vision.

4. *Proactive*

Planning assumes a progressive posture, stimulating dreams, creativity, and enthusiasm.

### 5. *Balanced*

Planning maintains focus and purpose by building assumptions and projections on the organizational mission and objectives. On the other hand, a proactive stance toward planning provides flexibility and opportunity for change. Together, continuity and change contribute to managed stability.

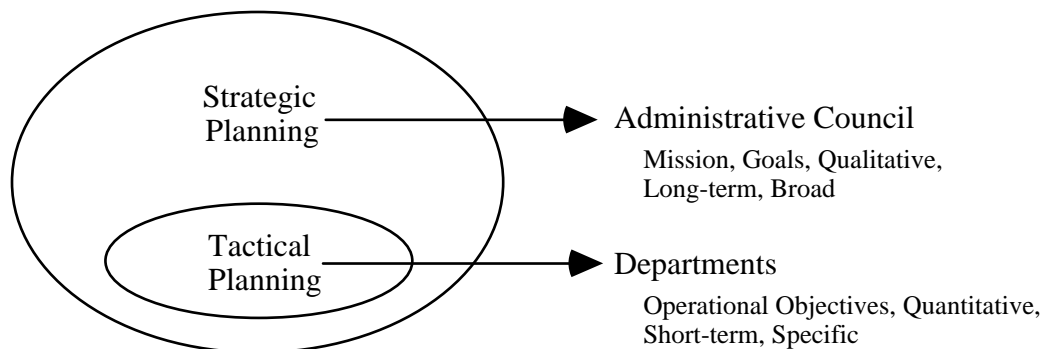
### 6. *Quality-focused*

Planning is a forum in which personnel can consider more than organizational survival. The planning process is a vehicle for staff and faculty contributions to students, society, and the health and vitality of the institution, and because planning is comprehensive, it enables the administration to coordinate the achievements of individuals into qualitatively superior programs.

## The Planning Model

Cedarville College employs a strategic planning model that places the responsibility for strategic decisions upon the Board of Trustees, the President, and the Administrative Council. These groups make decisions that are often more qualitative in nature, broader, and longer term in their potential effect upon the organization. Mid-management decisions, frequently referred to as “tactical planning,” are more quantitative, shorter term, specific, and procedural or programmatic in character.

In practice, however, there is frequently more overlap in strategic and tactical planning responsibilities than these definitional distinctions imply. As a matter of fact, especially in an academic institution, such collaboration is considered fruitful and encouraged. Tactical planning is considered a derivative, a complement, and a subset of strategic planning. The relationship of strategic planning to tactical planning could be conceived diagrammatically in this way:



As was mentioned earlier, another aspect of the Cedarville College strategic planning model that encourages interaction between the strategic and tactical planning levels is its participatory feature. All personnel, whatever their role and whatever their position in the organization's hierarchy, are extended the opportunity to participate. Mid-management is responsible for providing ample time and the setting to assure that their personnel contribute to the planning process. In this way planning helps to stimulate innovation and functions as a conduit through which many ideas may receive a fair and realistic hearing.

### **The Annual Planning Process**

The Cedarville College President appoints a part-time Director of Planning who is responsible for coordinating the annual planning process, overseeing task team operations, making periodic reports to the Administration, and directing the preparation of the annual planning report. The Director of Planning chairs the College Planning Group Steering Committee which is comprised of the divisional planning coordinators and two members-at-large. The focus of the College Planning Group is on the two fiscal years beyond the year for which the budget is being prepared. For example, in 1996/97, the 1997/98 budget is in preparation. The Planning Group's attention is therefore on 1998-2000 with specific attention being given to 1998/99.

The committee follows an annual planning calendar. Fall quarter is given over to the preparation for and the organization of the annual planning effort in each division. The Winter quarter is occupied with divisional planning activities and the preparation of each division's plan. The focus of the Spring Quarter is on the deliberations of the Steering Committee and the preparation of the final College Planning Group report including the report of the Futures Research Committee.

Each Vice President is responsible, within general guidelines set by the Planning Steering Committee, to determine the approach of his division to the planning effort each year. The role of the Planning Coordinator/Liaison in each division is determined by the Vice President. Each Vice President determines the type of input—printed or oral—required from his departmental managers. Once that input is gained, a process is established to involve division personnel in the development of a divisional plan to be submitted to the College Planning Group Steering Committee.

A Planning Coordinator is appointed for each division by his/her Vice President. That individual will assist the Vice President in the division planning activities and in the preparation of the Divisional strategic plan, serve as the liaison from the division to the College Planning Group Steering Committee, function as a planning resource person for the department heads in the division, motivate the department heads as they prepare their planning reports, and represent the Vice President and the division at the Steering Committee. At the College Planning Group Steering Committee, the Planning Coordinator presents and defends the division plan, negotiates priorities, clarifies any questions with the Vice President,

and together with the other Planning Coordinators, the Director of Planning, and the at-large members determines Committee recommendations.

The role of the College Planning Group Steering Committee is to analyze the divisional plans submitted, review the revised departmental plans, and make recommendations for priority. Basically, this involves a “reconciliation” of the five divisional plans. Those program and service plans that the College Planning Group Steering Committee considers to be consistent with the strategic direction and priorities of the College are assembled into a single College Planning Group Report. Recommendations are also entertained for adjustments or additions to the current strategic planning priorities of the College. At their summer retreat, the Administrative Council reviews the College Planning Group Report, alters the program plan recommendations at their discretion, and, after reviewing the recommended changes to the College strategic planning priorities, approves the new version of the strategic planning priorities. These revised priorities will then provide a basis for the next year’s planning activities.

The strategic planning priorities and approved plans are used as a guide for the budgeting process for the upcoming fiscal year. Department heads base budgetary requests and administrators determine allocations guided by the current institutional priorities. This linkage of planning and budgeting assures that the planning process is more than a “paper trail” and reinforces personnel support for thorough planning.

The Futures Research Committee performs on-going environmental scanning and develops assumptions, projections, and implications about the external environment in which the College will operate in the immediate future. These assumptions are written as “trends statements” and, along with suggested implications for the College, are submitted to the Administrative Council and departmental planners in the Fall. A revised version of the Futures trends report is also included as part of the College Planning Group report submitted in June to the Administrative Council for their summer retreat. The planning trends are derived from external environmental analysis, demographic and social trend analysis, literature scanning, assessment of the College’s strengths and weaknesses, and review of the higher education environment.

## **Ad Hoc Planning Committees**

Two types of planning committees are formed as needed and these committees fall outside the regular stream of the annual planning effort. Although these committees are separate from the Strategic Planning Group, they are still part of the over-all planning activities of the College.

### **Feasibility Study Teams**

The need or potential for new programs may arise from planning research, Planning Group recommendations, or administrative strategic decision. New programs that involve significant resource allocation, resource re-distribution, or

new directions relating to the College mission and objectives are usually assigned to a Feasibility Study Team. This committee of staff and faculty is appointed by the President and the Academic Vice President. The team is then charged with the responsibility of researching the new program idea during a timetable established by the administration. Feasibility Study Teams generally produce written program reports, which may be produced in several drafts. The administration encourages discussion by issuing copies of the drafts to department heads, planning personnel, and other interested and/or affected parties. If authorized through appropriate channels, new programs, via the department sponsoring them, become part of the annual planning process.

### **Facility Task Teams**

When a major facility renovation, expansion, or addition receives a high priority in the planning process to move ahead, it is assigned to a Facility Task Team to prepare the building “program.” The assignment of priority comes from the Administrative Council with the prior input of the College Planning Group. Once the Task Teams are formed, they often fall under the supervision of the Director of Planning. Task Team reports and recommendations are submitted to the Administrative Council.

The Task Team is composed of a small number (4-6) of vitally interested persons who conduct the research. Their study is to include input from as many other persons as possible. Hopefully, the process will maintain the efficiency of a small group while achieving the wisdom of the larger group. Task Team members also visit facilities at colleges with similar institutional programs and buildings.

In a Facility Task Team study, the process follows a logical order from mission/objectives to programs to personnel to operations and, finally, to a facility which matches all those preceding elements. Beginning with the College mission and objectives, the study centers on the consequent mission and objectives of the particular unit to be housed in the new facility, detailing the specific program needs necessary to fulfill that unit’s mission and objectives. That description includes the nature of the program function, the space and equipment required, and the necessary and desirable relationships within program functions. The building program study quite naturally includes projections of personnel needed for program fulfillment and operational factors once the facilities are constructed and occupied.

This process culminates in the building program plan document which, after acceptance by the Administrative Council and the Board of Trustees, is submitted to the architects. The architects then work with the Task Team, appropriate consultants, and the Administrative Council in the interpretation of the document so that the building design captures the essence and spirit of the study. The intent of the process is that, when following the sequence, facilities actually “facilitate” the accomplishment of the mission and objectives housed in the structure.

Recent facilities constructed using this process include the Library (1987) and the Engineering/Nursing/Science Center (1992) and the Dixon Ministry Center (1996). Currently, a Student Union Task Team has submitted a building program which the Administrative Council is evaluating.

Feasibility Study and Facility Task Teams are comprised of interested, diligent, and competent individuals who contribute expertise related to the program or facility proposed. Team recommendations may or may not be supported in their entirety, but team efforts are always necessary and fruitful. Team planning, like planning generally, does not eliminate the possibility of error in an uncertain world, but quality planning does help to reduce the possibility of error and contributes to a more rational decision-making process.

## **Other Planning Entities**

### **Trustees**

The Trustee board meets as a total board four times annually. In relation to planning, the Executive Committee of the Trustee board serves as a planning subcommittee. They annually review the strategic plan of the College and provide input to that process. Periodically, there is total board participation in long range planning as the board “visions” the future of the College. The last time this occurred was in the 1995-96 academic year.

### **Administrative Council**

The Administrative Council is made up of the President and the Vice Presidents. This group meets annually to consider the state of the College, its future and evaluate how well it is meeting its objectives. As the Council formulates and makes plans, they rely heavily on the Planning Report, which is the formal report of the strategic planning process.

The Administrative Council may also make plans independently from the formal strategic processes. However, this “top-down” type of planning is not totally independent from the strategic planning process. At some point in the planning process, or the operation to carry out the plan, the strategic planning process is engaged. For example, the campus-wide computer network was initiated and originally planned by the Administrative Council. A task team was assigned by the Academic Vice President to assess feasibility of a computer network. He used data from the strategic planning process to justify the task team; he observed that there was strong emphasis on development of computer technology in the planning report documents from the individual academic departments. Eventually, the task team was able to input the computer network idea into the strategic planning process. It then became a College priority and was subsequently implemented.

### **Divisions**

Department Chair meetings in the Academic Division are a good example of planning at the divisional level. The department chairs regularly assess their departments and make plans and proposals for change at the department chair meetings. Proposals are made, discussed and prioritized within the division and implemented. Many of the proposals are made with input from individuals in the department as they assess the department and its role in the future. Typical proposals involve the addition of new faculty, programs, or courses.

### **Departments**

All departments have regular meetings to discuss their progress and their future. In these meetings, input from individuals in the department is solicited and programs are evaluated. Proposals are formulated and the changes are implemented. Proposals are often voted on and then submitted to the next level, which is usually the department chair meetings at the divisional level.

## **Outcomes of the Planning Process**

### **Effect on Institutional Integrity**

Exercising proper stewardship involves making decisions about the assets and opportunities of the institution. These decisions, if made only for the moment and without consideration of their consequences, can result in poor stewardship. Planning involves anticipating as much as possible the future appropriateness of current decisions, much more than it involves future decisions.

Stewardship recognizes a responsibility toward current assets. By the grace of God, Cedarville College has numerous assets in its personnel, programs, ministries, support, facilities, reputation, constituency, market niche, and many other factors. The institution must also demonstrate good stewardship of its opportunities, those persons and things God has for us in the future. Moving from what is to what can be is inherent in the process of planning.

### **Effect on the Budget Process**

The planning process of Cedarville College is not simply an annual exercise in departmental cooperation. Rather, the resultant reports of the planning committees are mirrored in the next year's budget. Through the planning committee annual report, the Administration receives recommendations for institutional priorities based on the strategic goals and directions outlined in the divisional plans. Once a decision is made concerning the selection of current institutional priorities, the planning report serves to prioritize the various department goals and strategies based on their congruity with current institutional priorities. Many funding decisions, then, are based in part on the recommendations of the annual planning report.

The most recent evidence of the connection between the planning process and the budget process is seen in the proposed budget for 1997-98. The Administration approved four planning priorities in 1996-97. They were:

1. Preserve and Enhance Campus Culture
2. Continue to Manage the Dynamics of Change
3. Extend the Resources of the College
4. Extend the Institutional Vision

The first priority involves activity more than funding. Issues of budget are especially linked to the last three priorities. Direct links to each priority are shown below. Each priority is listed with selected tentative budgetary expenditures.

*Priority #2*

Upgrade of Residence Halls  
 Upgrade Nursing and Science Equipment  
 Computers and Printer for New Academic Positions  
 Increase Faculty Development Funds  
 Increase Funding for Repairs to New Facilities

*Priority #3*

Five New Faculty Positions  
 Faculty Salary Adjustments  
 Numerous Staff Positions  
 Increase Employee Benefits  
 Complete Funding for New Land Acquisitions  
 Increase Institutional Financial Aid

*Priority #4*

Fund Initial Distance Learning Efforts  
 Begin Women's Intercollegiate Soccer

**Effect on Facilities and Program Expansion**

As noted above, the planning process is an integral part of any new program or facility. In most instances, a need is documented in the annual planning report which results in a feasibility committee or facility task team. The Director of Strategic Planning serves on most of these committees as a means of linking all of the process together.

**Strengths and Challenges**

**Strengths**

*Focused*

The planning process at Cedarville College is directly connected to the mission of the institution.

*Valued by the Administration*

Institutional leadership, especially the President, places high importance on the process and its implications. The results of planning are integrally connected into administrative decisions.

*Broad-Based*

The current methods of planning promote institutional communication and include wide involvement across all elements of the College. The process also allows evaluation by groups other than the top-level administration.

*Effective Connections Between Planning and Action*

Strategic planning at Cedarville has demonstrable outcomes. There is a definite correlation between plans and resource allocation.

### *Flexible Organization*

The College is able to combine procedures tailored for each division into one single institutional process.

### *Annual Completion*

The planning process is a regular part of the annual activities of departments and divisions. Strategic changes in response to external pressures are possible within a much smaller timeframe.

## **Challenges**

### *Delineating the Effects of Planning*

Once the planning process is completed and the Administration decides on the best course of action in response to the planning documents, it is sometimes a challenge to complete the planning loop and inform departments on the results of their planning efforts. The vice presidents are aware of this difficulty and are working on better methods for disseminating the information.

### *Maintaining Consistency and Relevance*

The quality of planning is linked inextricably with levels of interest, training, and expectations. A continuing challenge at Cedarville College is to reinforce the need for the process and underscore the results of the process. It is also extremely important that the process provide relevant outcomes to all divisions within the institution. Given the broad scope of divisional responsibilities, there is still work to be done in this area.

## **Summary**

Cedarville College has a well-defined planning process which defines the institutional efforts in both the long-term and the short-term. The annual process involves the entire institution. The planning process has demonstrated connection to the current institutional direction and its direct connection with the institutional mission provides a solid foundation for future directions. These patterns of evidence demonstrate that Cedarville College meets the requirements of the NCA's Criterion Four.