Strategic Planning Process

Departmental Directions 2009-2015
The Role and Contribution of Academic Departments

As Department Chair, what do I need to do?

This is not an assignment for the Chair but rather a major opportunity for the department. As leader of your academic unit, your role, task and responsibility is to guide this planning project so that it will result in strengthening your department, ultimately to benefit the College.

What should I be discussing with my faculty?

Your faculty should have the opportunity to think about and discuss as a group

- the role your programs play in the mission and vision of the College
- the history of your department’s enrollment and program
- your importance to the College’s academic program
- the changing face of higher education in your department’s discipline(s)
- your shared vision of the department 2009-2013
- possibilities and new opportunities for your department’s future

Your department may have spent time discussing some of these topics. This is the time to get consensus on these issues, to think strategically about your current programs and about new directions that may be appropriate and hold promise for you and for the College.
How will my department be included in the Strategic Plan?

The keystone of the strategic plan will be the new ideas that come from academic departments. Although there are no constraints for these ideas, some possible proposals include:

- new major/minor
- new certificate or other non-degree program
- center or interdisciplinary institute
- new study-abroad course/program
- cross-disciplinary lecture series or major conference
- other co-curricular initiative or student program

Are there specific topical areas recommended for exploration?

The Cabinet for Strategic Planning has reviewed current campus-wide programs and listed the following Core Focus Areas (a Core Focus Area is a broad category of activity with a coherent theme and campus-wide reach):

1. Women’s Leadership
2. Global Connectivity
3. Civic Engagement
4. Health and Wellness
5. ???
6. ???

Focus Areas 1-4 were determined by grouping campus activities into natural categories. However, there is opportunity for departments to define additional focus areas for proposals, particularly if there is other campus activity in this area. So departments should not let their creativity be constrained by the listing above.
What should my “Directions” document contain?

As department chair, you determine the content of your “Directions” document. Obviously, the most important element of your document will be proposed new ideas. As your idea must ultimately be studied and analyzed, any quantitative and qualitative information you can supply from your position of knowledge and experience will be very helpful. Depending upon the nature of your idea, some useful questions might be

- Is this idea/program important/relevant to the local/national/global landscape?
- Is there current/prospective student interest/demand for this program?
- What is the enrollment history in your major programs? In your opinion, are these optimal numbers? Does this program have the potential to affect enrollment positively?
- What programs of this type exist elsewhere locally or otherwise? Is this an important factor to consider?
- How might this program revitalize your academic program?
- Does this idea have the potential to help address the “balance” issue, that is, will this initiative help to increase enrollment in an area other than the few majors that are currently the most popular?
- How will this idea enhance the College’s academic program?
- Is there potential for this program to connect to student life / student activities / residential life?
- Is this an idea that might appeal to alumnae or others as donors?

Feel free to expand on this list of questions if it will help you frame your proposal and make the best case for your idea.

**It is important that your proposal tells what needs to be done to actualize this idea.** The following information will be useful:

- Additional faculty/staff
- New equipment/facilities
- Administrative support / services

**It would also be helpful to know how the proposal might be implemented in steps.** For example,

- Fall 2009 – invite interested faculty from both departments to discuss the speaker series; invite student representatives; decide on a topic; solicit list of potential speakers
- Spring 2009 - invite speaker; arrange date; plan activities to generate student interest
- Etc.
What types of proposals are likely to be targeted for early implementation?

“Directions” documents will be widely available as described below. Faculty and staff will then weigh the merits of each proposal based on the following criteria:

- How well does this proposal amplify the mission and vision?
- Will this proposal contribute to programs in the area of women’s leadership?
- Does this proposal offer opportunities to increase our enrollment?
- Does this proposal address the “balance” issue, that is, emphasize an area other than our current group of popular majors?
- Does this proposal cross disciplinary lines, thereby expanding its reach and achieving a synergy that enhances programs in a number of areas? Joint proposals are encouraged.

What is the deadline for submitting my “Directions” document?

We are allowing two months for this process. Submissions should be made to the President’s office by 9 AM on January 5 to allow for the compilation and circulation described below.

Where and how will my “Directions” document be used?

Ideas for proposals will be compiled into a master document and shared, first with all department chairs and then, at the Faculty/Staff summit on January 15, among all other faculty and staff. There will be ample time allowed for faculty and staff to consider and discuss all ideas submitted. After a thorough discussion of all proposals, it is anticipated that there will be broad consensus as to which ideas should be implemented first. The ultimate decision as to how and when the College will act on each proposal rests with the President and the Trustees.

In February and March of 2009 the Cabinet, in consultation with appropriate faculty and staff, will create Action Plans for proposals that are most likely to be implemented in years 1-3 of the Strategic Plan. These Action Plans will be costed out during the summer of 2009 and the feasibility of the proposal will be revisited.

Proposals not slated for immediate implementation will become part of a repository of long-range ideas that will serve as a constant source of possibilities and opportunities for the future.