



Institutional Planning Advisory Committee (IPAC)

Buffalo State · The State University of New York
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Strategic Planning Process at Buffalo State College: 2021

Introduction

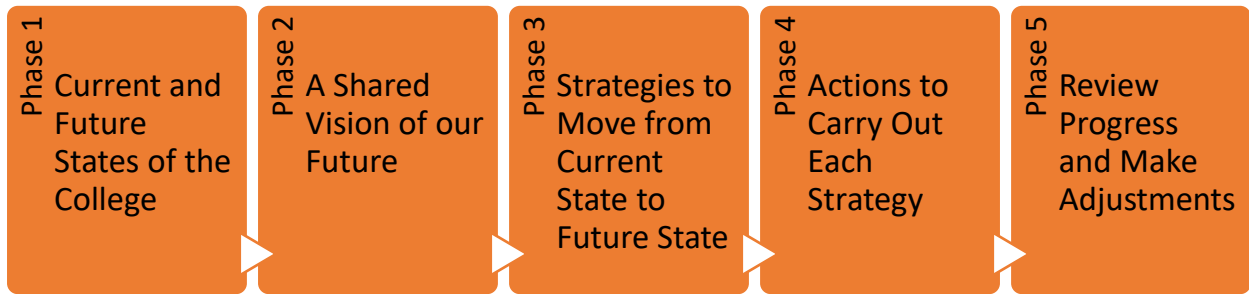
Buffalo State College's Institutional Planning Advisory Committee (IPAC) embarked upon the development of a new three-year strategic plan in 2021. The process was guided by the document *Essential Strategic Planning Phases and an Example Approach for an Academic Department* by Jonathan Hulbert, Director of Leadership and Organizational Development at Buffalo State. The methodology presented in Jonathan Hulbert's document aligns with recommendations provided by the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) and has been used successfully in academic department strategic planning throughout Buffalo State College. This new institutional strategic planning document captures the main elements of our existing document with modifications made to reflect institution-wide strategic planning.

Key Terms

- Current State – Examining the college's effectiveness in attaining outcomes used to define success.
- Future State – Ideal outcomes the college wants to advance for its stakeholders.
- Strategic Plan – Strategies that move the college from its current state to a desired future state.
- Operational Plan – Specific actions taken to advance each strategy identified in the strategic plan.
- Stakeholders – Any constituent who provides values or receives value from the college, which may include faculty, students, staff, community members, alumni, advisory boards, corporate/non-profit partners, etc.

Strategic Planning Steps

Strategic planning at Buffalo State College will follow a five-phase process. Each phase guides the identification of institutional goals with clear methodologies for attaining established goals. In addition, a series of questions to consider within each phase will be addressed.



Phase 1
Current and Future States of the College

Where are we now and how should our focus change?

The purpose of Phase 1 is to assess the current state of the college and its ability to attain key goals from stakeholder perspectives. The alignment of the college’s strategy to respond to future trends and changing needs of its stakeholders will determine the success and sustainability of the college. Collecting data from the college’s stakeholders regarding their experiences with the college, projected future trends, and how the college can better meet their needs is critical for ensuring that a strategic plan moves the college to a desired future state relevant

for all stakeholders.

Areas to explore include identifying existing data from surveys, focus groups, annual reports, and other data gathered from initiatives relevant to understanding the college’s current state and projected future state. Questions to consider include the following:

- Does existing data adequately represent the current and projected future states of stakeholders or is additional data collection necessary to best understand the college’s stakeholders? If additional data are needed, what type of data and how will the data be presented? What is our timeline for collecting data?
- Based upon existing data and potentially additional data to be collected, what future trends and/or changes do stakeholders believe will have the most significant positive impact on their experiences with the college? How can the college currently and in the future meet the needs of stakeholder groups?

Phase 2
A Shared Vision of Our Future

Where do we want to be?

The purpose of Phare 2 is to identify a shared vision for the desired future state of the college that meets stakeholder needs and fits within the context of the current and projected future of the external environment.

Areas to address include the completion of a SCOT analysis (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats) that is informed by Phase 1 data. Upon completion of the SCOT analysis, the following topics will be addressed by the

campus community:

- Strengths to leverage that will provide the most value.
- Challenges to overcome that have the highest risk of impacting the college's progress toward future goals.
- Investment in opportunities that will provide the most competitive advantages for the future.
- Threats to mitigate that will have the greatest negative impact on the college.
- Threats to mitigate that are most likely to occur, regardless of impact on the college.

SCOT Analysis

STRENGTHS to leverage: The college's resources and capabilities that can be used to develop a competitive advantage.

- What does the college do better than other institutions in higher education?
- What unique resources are available to the college?
- What is distinctive about the college and its stakeholders?

CHALLENGES to overcome: The college's areas for improvement or areas that are not listed as strengths.

- Where is the college struggling?
- What resources does the college lack?
- What are other institutions in higher education doing with more success than our college is experiencing?
- How is the college perceived by stakeholders?

Opportunities to invest: External opportunities for growth, improved quality, distinctiveness from competitors, and new/emergent/changing areas to focus resources.

- What opportunities are there to distinguish the college from other institutions of higher education?
- What are the future needs and changes that the college does not currently address?
- What opportunities exist to take advantages of trends in technology?
- What recent regulatory, political, economic, and social changes have impacted the college focus areas and how might those create opportunities?
- What are the unmet needs of stakeholders?

Threats to mitigate: Possible external events or forces outside of the college's control to plan for or mitigate.

- What *external* social, economic, regulatory, and political trends currently are or might in the future impact the college's effectiveness?
- What *internal* campus financial, political, and regulatory forces currently exist are or might potentially impact the college in the future?
- What activities are other institutions in higher education engaging in that that could threaten the competitive advantage of the college?

How will we get there?

In Phase 3, strategies will be formulated that will provide the most value within the context of the college's resource capacity to move the college from its current state to a desired future state. During this phase, the college will formulate strategy prototypes using the SCOT analysis results from Phase 2 and eventually choose among the strategies to include in the strategic plan. The tool used to assist with strategy development through processing the SCOT analysis is a TOCS matrix (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Theory of Constraints (TOC) Matrix			
		Strengths	Challenges
		1	1
		2	2
		3	3
Opportunities		Opportunity-Strength Strategies	Opportunity-Challenges Strategies
		(Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities)	(Overcome challenges by taking advantage of opportunities)
1		1	1
2		2	2
3		3	3
Threats		Threat-Strength Strategies	Threat-Challenges Strategies
		(Use strengths to avoid threats)	(Minimize challenges to avoid threats)
1		1	1
2		2	2
3		3	3

Once several strategies are developed, the viability of each strategy will be explored within the context of the college's resource capacity by creating strategy prototypes that include the following information:

- What competitive advantage/value will this strategy provide for the college in meeting the future trends and changing needs of stakeholders?
- How will the success of this strategy be measured?
- What action steps might need to be taken to advance this strategy?
- What resources are needed to support this strategy (i.e., time, people, financial)?
- What might the college need to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing to advance this strategy?

The last step in Phase 3 is to identify the strategies to include in the strategic plan by facilitating the development of a strategy evaluation matrix and evaluating each strategy prototype using the

matrix. The matrix will allow the college community to discuss, debate, and share perspectives about the evaluations they provide for each strategy. Once all strategies have been evaluated and discussed with the campus community, the strategies with the highest evaluations will be included in the strategic plan.

Phase 4

Actions to Carry Out Each Strategy

Who must do what and by when?

In Phase 4, an operational plan is established to advance each strategy (see Figure 2). An operational plan supports efforts for advancing strategies that are coordinated and aligned while also providing a shared map for stakeholders to adjust and/or change actions as the internal and external environment changes.

Figure 2

Operational Plan Template		
Strategy 1:		
Outcome Measures - How will attainment of the strategy be measured?		
Actions to be taken to advance this strategy	Date action will be completed	Responsibility for action

Questions to consider in developing an operational plan include the following:

- What should be included in the operational plan?
- How should the campus community be involved in sharing feedback and comment to further improve upon the plan?
- How should decisions be made regarding revising and approving the plan?

Phase 5

Review
Progress
and Make
Adjustments

How are we doing and what do we need to modify?

Reviewing strategy progress within an established timeframe and making needed adjustments to improve advancement toward the desired state takes place in Phase 5.

Questions to consider include the following:

- How should the process be reviewed?
- How often should the process be reviewed?
- How will decisions be made regarding adjusting elements within the strategic plan?