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Strategic Planning at Cedarville College

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Cedarville College employs a planning model which embodies Christian principles of faith and stewardship while providing effective direction for management. Strategic planning at Cedarville is comprehensive, participatory, proactive, balanced, and aimed at quality. The method combines long-term projection, short-term flexibility, and responsiveness to environmental change. An example of the planning process is provided with a table showing the division of responsibility.

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THE NEED FOR PLANNING

Planning is a Part of Exercising Christian Faith

Many Christians resist planning because they think that it violates the Biblical injunction to "live by faith." Being led by the Spirit of God, they assume, means having a completely open agenda and being sensitive to impulses at decision times. Properly conceived, however, planning is necessary to the exercise of Christian faith that issues in obedience. Faith without obedience, we recall from James, is dead.

Planning is the "sowing" of the "sowing/reaping" principle (Gal. 6: II Cor. 9). The nature of the harvest is not determined at the time of the harvest, but rather at the time the farmer plans and prepares to sow the seed. Planning specifically fulfills the injunction of James 4:15: ".. you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live, and do this or that."

Planning is consistent with those New Testament passages that picture the Christian life as a race, complete with a goal and a course. Strategic planning involves a clear understanding of one's goal and the recognition of the need to make decisions to advance toward that goal.

Planning is Part of Good Stewardship

Exercising proper stewardship involves making decisions about our assets and our opportunities. 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 futurity of current decisions, much more than it involves future decisions.

Stewardship recognizes a re-
sponsibility toward our current assets. By the grace of God, we have numerous assets in our personnel, programs, ministries, support, facilities, reputation, constituency, market niche, and many other factors. We also must be good stewards of our opportunities, those persons and things God has for us in the future. Moving from what is to what can be is the decision process inherent in planning.

Planning is Part of Our Fidelity to Our Calling
It is easy to drift, only reacting to the circumstances we encounter. We may do what is good but we fail if we substitute the good for the essential. It is absolutely imperative that we know what direction we should be going. When Alice asked directions from the Cheshire Cat in Lewis Carroll's classic, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, she said, "I don't much care where... so long as I get somewhere." to which the Cat replied, "Oh you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough."

Hopefully, our institutional objective is more than merely to keep walking. It does matter where we "get to." It matters which way we go. By the grace and in the providence of God, we have an opportunity to participate in charting the course.

Planning is Important Due to the Nature of the Changes in Our Society and Higher Education
In times past, schools survived and even prospered without the challenges that require our planning. Higher education was still a scarce commodity in a market dominated by the sellers. Programs could be started and increased incrementally, for in those expansion times, students were clamoring to be admitted. The democratization of higher education, the massive build-up to accommodate the new student populations, followed by the shrinking numbers of traditional college students, aggravated by the drastic redefinitions of the nature of education, changed the entire landscape.

Planners find themselves in a dilemma. The greater the threats and the more rapid the change, the greater the need for planning. Yet, the greater the uncertainty about the future, the greater the chance that today's plans will be inadequate. We choose not to succumb to this dilemma. Realizing the limitations of our vision, we still attempt to anticipate the threats and opportunities and prepare to meet them with strategies within the parameters of the College mission and objectives.

THE PURPOSE OF PLANNING
Quite simply, the purpose of planning is prosperity, 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 individual college departments, this provides a process to help each department improve what it is doing, thus enhancing their ability to contribute to the success of the college.

THE PLANNING PHILOSOPHY
Planning is a management tool. Planning enables management to make better decisions in the interest of long-term health, vitality, and quality of the organization. The value of planning lies in its emphasis upon a rationally-developed understanding of one's purpose (mission and objectives), one's uncertainties (opportunities and challenges; strengths and weaknesses), and one's alternatives (decisions, choices). Through planning, an organization 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 in this way:

\[
\text{Philosophy} \quad \downarrow \\
\text{Programs} \quad \downarrow \\
\text{Personnel} \quad \downarrow \\
\text{Operations \\ Equipment} \quad \downarrow \\
\text{Facilities}
\]

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:

A. Comprehensive. Planning involves facilities, programs, personnel, budgeting, marketing, etc.

B. 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.

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

D. Balance. Planning maintains focus and purpose by building assumptions and projections on the organizational mission and objectives. But planning's proactive stance provides flexi-
bility and opportunity for change. Together, continuity and change contribute to managed stability.

E. Quality. Planning is a forum in which personnel can consider more than organizational survival. In a college, planning 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

A technique called “master planning” was first used in higher education as a means of projecting twenty or more years into the future. But early master planning tended to ignore the social environment and soon became an obsolete methodology. Next, “long-range planning” concentrated on just five to ten years and introduced new “environmental scanning” techniques, but it, too, became increasingly inadequate.

“Strategic planning,” now widely applied, attempts to establish a planning and decision-making process capable of quickly reacting to change. It gathers information in an effort to anticipate environmental developments, match these external challenges and opportunities with internal, institutional strengths and weaknesses, and “position” the organization appropriately for the near future of one to three years. It is the most dynamic of the three models discussed here.

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 impact 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:

Strategic Planning

- Administrative Council:
  - Mission
  - Goals
  - Qualitative
  - Longer Term
  - Broader

Tactical Planning

- Departments:
  - Operational Objectives
  - Quantitative (Measurable)
  - Shorter Term

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 roles and whatever their positions 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 (See: Mid-Management Planning at Cedarville College). In this way planning helps to stimulate innovation and functions as a conduit through which 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 teams, and making periodic reports to the administration. The President, in consultation with the Director of Planning, then appoints the College Planning Group comprised of about thirty interested and dedicated staff and faculty members. This Group is divided into five working committees: Planning Premises, Academic Department Programs, Auxiliary Programs, Student-Centered Support Services, and Operations-Centered Support Services (See Appendix). The program and service committees, called Planning Analysis Committees, are responsible for facilitating and evaluating the planning activities and program plans of college departments (See Appendix). The focus of the College Planning Group is on the two fiscal years following the year for which the budget is being prepared. In 1989/90, for example, the 1990/91 budget is in preparation. The Planning Group’s attention is therefore on 1991-1993, with most specific attention being given to 1991/92.

The Planning Premises Committee performs its work primarily during Spring Quarter, March to May, and develops assumptions and projections relating to the college’s probable immediate future. These assumptions and projections...
are written as “premise statements” and, along with the development of divisional planning premises from each vice president, are distributed to all college personnel in the following Fall Quarter as a foundation for the yearly planning effort. Planning premises are derived from demographic and social trend analyses, self-study assessments of the college’s strengths and weaknesses, competitive analyses of similar colleges and universities, alumni studies, faculty and staff ideas, and administrative direction.

The Planning analysis Committees meet regularly from January to May, working with vice presidents and department heads to develop and evaluate the tactical program plans of individual college departments. These four committees evaluate departments’ program plans, sometimes in the process “challenging” department proposals and requests by soliciting additional justification and information from department personnel. Those program and service plans that the Planning Analysis Committees consider institutionally strategic are assembled into a single College Planning Group report recommending priority issues and plans and submitted to the administration. At their summer retreat, the Administrators review this report, alter priority recommendations at their discretion, and issue a final list of priority program plans for the next budgeting cycle. In this process the College Planning Group only recommends; its work is important to the administration in enhancing decision-making, but the Planning Group makes no decisions.

The priorities list is used to guide the budgeting process in the upcoming fiscal year. Department heads base budgetary requests and administrators determine allocations guided by the priority recommendations. This linkage of planning and budgeting assures that the planning process is more than a “paper trail” and reinforces personnel support for thorough planning.

PLANNING FOR NEW PROGRAMS

The need or potential for new programs may arise from planning research. Planning Group recommendations, or administrative strategic decisions. New programs that involve significant resource allocation, resource redistribution, or new directions relating to the college mission and objectives are assigned to a Feasibility Study Team. This committee of staff and faculty are 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 reports, which may be produced in several drafts. The administration encourages discussion by issuing copies of drafts to department heads, planning personnel, and other interested parties. If authorized through appropriate channels, new programs, via the department sponsoring them, become part of the annual planning process.

PLANNING FOR NEW FACILITIES

When a major facility renovation, expansion, or addition receives a high priority to move ahead, it is assigned to a Facility Task Team. The assignment of priority comes from the Administration and the College Planning Group. The College Planning Group does not then have direct involvement with the Task Team, but the on-going operations of the facility task teams fall under the supervision of the Director of Planning. Task team reports and recommendations are submitted to the Administration.

The Task Team is composed of a small number (4-6) of vitally interested persons who conduct the research. Their study is to include as many persons as possible. Hopefully, the process will maintain the efficiency of a small group while achieving the wisdom of the larger group. For instance, the Library Task Team had 6 members but included the input of every academic department, many staff departments, and students in its study. Also included were a nationally prominent academic library building consultant, Trustees, and others. Task team members also visit facilities at colleges with similar institutional programs.

In a Task team study, the process follows a logical order: 1) mission/objectives, 2) programs, 3) personnel, 4) operations, and then 5) facility. Beginning with College mission and objectives, the study centers on the consequent mission and objectives of that particular unit. For instance, the Library Task Team first wrestled with such questions as “What is a college Library?” “What does the nature of Cedarville College dictate for the nature of library services?” “What growth and development plans and possibilities at Cedarville College will impact the nature of the library services in the years to come?”

Then, the programs necessary to fulfill that mission and those objectives are identified and detailed. In the Library study, every program essential to the functioning of an academic library was described. That description included the nature of the program function, the space and equipment required, and the necessary and desirable relationships with other program functions. The program studies quite naturally include projections of personnel needed for program ful-

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fillment, and operational factors once the programs are begun. Every effort is made to project personnel and operations beyond the initial stages, so that the long term effectiveness of the programs is anticipated.

All of this process results in the program plan document which, after acceptance by the administration, is submitted to the architects. The architects then work with the task team, appropriate consultants, and the administration 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 this sequence, facilities actually "facilitate" the accomplishment of mission and objectives.

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, 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.

Appendix
CEDARVILLE COLLEGE
COLLEGE PLANNING GROUP
Division of Responsibility

Planning Premises Committee
PLANNING ANALYSIS
COMMITTEES (PACS): Committee on Academic Department Programs
- Biblical Education
- Business Administration
- Communication Arts
- Education
- Engineering
- Health & Physical Ed.
- Language & Literature
- Music
- Nursing
- Psychology
- Science and Math
- Social Sciences & History

Committee on Auxiliary Programs
- Athletic Program
- Campus Activities

Career Planning & Placement
Christian Ministries
Counseling Services
Honors Program
Library
Residence Hall Program
Student Services
Summer School

Committee on Student-centered Support Services
- Admissions
- Academic Records
- Bookstore
- Computer Services
- Financial Aid
- Food Service
- Patterson Clinic
- Post Office

Committee on Operations-centered Support Services
- Administrative Offices
- Alumni Relations
- Annual Giving
- Business Office
- Copy Center
- Institutional Research
- Personnel Services
- Physical Plant
- Planned Giving
- Public Relations
- WCDR

35th Annual Conference
ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS
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Eastern Pentecostal Bible College
Peterborough, Ontario