This chapter discusses how to involve academic faculty in the student affairs strategic planning process through an understanding of their respective commonalities and the academic view of their work through teaching, scholarship, and service.

Involving Academic Faculty in Developing and Implementing a Strategic Plan

Rich Whitney

Strategic planning is a process that seeks to involve as many internal and external organizational collaborators as possible. For student affairs, this translates into within-divisional work groups and creating opportunities elsewhere on campus. The faculty corps provides a natural partnership to help the division of student affairs create a holistic plan that can have many positive effects for the whole campus (Kezar and Lester, 2009). The diversity of talent, expertise, and perspective available on campus provides energy for powerful partnerships and programs. The key to harnessing this potential energy is understanding the differences and points of view between student affairs and the faculty.

I have had the benefit of working as both a student affairs professional and a faculty member and can offer a unique perspective on involving academics in developing and implementing strategic plans. This chapter explores why student affairs professionals and faculty members should work together to develop and implement a strategic plan. Including faculty in the process can provide additional perspectives, research interests, expertise, as well as committee members and additional energy to complete the process.

After reviewing a general process for implementing a strategic plan, this chapter explores how to include faculty in the process. This partnership provides a more holistic approach and draws on the natural talents and resources waiting to be tapped on campus.
Overcoming Culture Clash with Communication

Have you ever tried to explain the functions and duties of student affairs professionals? Family and friends do not always understand this role on campus. Oddly enough, the same can be true for college faculty members. The complexities of the modern university campus for both student affairs and college faculty are unique. The interaction of faculty and staff governance with the learning laboratory of student governance and advising do not typically fit administrative and business models (Kezar and Lester, 2009; Komives and Associates, 2003). Perhaps the fraternity and sorority t-shirt sums up our impasse: “From the outside it is hard to understand, and from the inside it is hard to explain.” The campus microcosm can provide just as many internal complexities that can result in a culture clash between the faculty and student affairs professionals (Kezar and Lester, 2009). To make matters more confusing, we have to add to the previous analogy that it is also hard to explain from the inside to the inside. The responsibility of explaining our respective roles and duties on campus lies within each of the divisions of academic affairs and student affairs. There are opportunities for both groups to work together to improve the institution and our final product.

Borrowing from John Gray’s book Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus (1993) to make a point about communication, we can suggest that a similar situation exists between faculty and the division of student affairs. It would seem that just because faculty and student affairs exist on the same campus, each fully understands the other and appreciates the work each contributes to the campus mission and vision. Just as it would be egregious to assume that all men and women fail to communicate, it is also a mistake to assume that all faculty and student affairs professionals are unaware of each group’s contributions to the whole. However, there seems to be enough of a divide to make the point that student affairs and faculty do not really understand the contributions one another make to the whole campus approach (Gardner, 1986, 2009; Pace, Blumenreich, and Merkle, 2006; Whitt and others, 2008; Fried, 2007).

Importance of Faculty Involvement

The answer to why faculty should work with student affairs professionals to create and implement a strategic plan involves maximizing talent and expertise, responding to increased competition for funding, increasing the reputation of the university in an increasingly competitive market, and capitalizing on learning efficacy for students.

Many in the community and business world use a university campus as a resource. Faculty members are experts in their fields and research. Within the institution, there is the added benefit of working with these internal experts who already understand the mission, values, institutional
history, and culture. It could be easier to attain the sense of collaboration and create a guiding coalition (Kotter, 1996). Often there is a learning curve for both parties while they get up to speed on the culture and history of the organization. That student affairs and faculty exist on the same campus can accelerate the speed of implementation. The benefits to student affairs of working with faculty members include improved relationships and an increased understanding of the expertise that student affairs professionals provide the campus and students.

Student affairs will not be the only beneficiary of this relationship and collaboration. The many offices, services, and programs implemented on campus to help students persist to graduation may be unknown entities in the individual departments of academe. The many resources created by student services may be some of the best-kept secrets on campus outside of the specific program and student populations. This was a surprising fact for me as I was making the transition from the administrative side of campus to the role of professor. This might be explained by the fact that many of the faculty members we encounter during graduate studies in higher education programs work closely with student services and campus offices. This familiarity may seem to be the norm and would be a common assumption that other faculty members are as well versed in campus services and programs.

Where Are We Now?

The reality of the modern university is the competitive market for students. There are increasing options to accomplish educational goals through for-profit campuses, hybrid programs, online options, as well as campuses that combine practical work/life experience with their in-class work and assignments. Students are recruited to a whole campus experience through admissions brochures, campus visits, and student affairs staff. This whole campus approach addresses diversity, classroom ratios, faculty experience, learning opportunities, residence halls, and clubs and organizations, among many others. In short, we present the big picture of campus that incorporates student affairs and faculty functions. Students arrive on campus expecting that same whole campus experience they got excited about when they were deciding where to apply to college. It is vital that academic affairs and student affairs follow through on the promises made at recruitment and tuition collection times (Pace, Blumenreich, and Merkle, 2006; Gardner, 1986, 2009; Newton and Smith, 2008).

Including faculty in the student affairs strategic planning process contributes to the recruiting and persistence of students as well. The current conditions in the higher education market include more competition for funding dollars and a dynamic marketplace in the United States and abroad. Student affairs and the faculty have a stake in working together to create a strategic plan for the benefit of the institution. The efficacy of
higher education has been discussed by state and national politicians that could have implications campuswide (Whitt and others, 2008; Pace, Blumenreich, and Merkle, 2006; Newton and Smith, 2008; Dungy, 2005; Komives, 2003; Barr, 2000). We are living in a new era of accountability that requires proving that higher education is delivering a knowledge product that is of value to students and alumni in the job market (Newton and Smith, 2008). There is a perception on the part of some that institutions of higher education are defying authority and resisting accountability (Dungy, 2005) and that we have an inability to provide benchmarks (Newton and Smith, 2008). The organizational links that create the complete college experience for every student happen in a developmental, intentional progression toward the final degree conferral. Each of these functions—recruiting, housing, academics and scholarship, and campus involvement—contributes to the overall student experience. In short, retention and persistence are whole campus concerns that can be addressed through strategic planning.

The differentiation of departments and programs on campus endorses collaboration to the benefit of the student (Newton and Smith, 2008). The more faculty and student affairs can work together to contribute to the quality of education, the better the outcomes will be for our prime stakeholders: our students (Dungy, 2005). Jane Fried (2007) notes that faculty seem to work out of a playbook for teaching separate from another for everything else. She suggests consolidating into one playbook regardless of who has the ball. This passing of the ball is analogous to building relationships and recognizing natural patterns that exist on campus (Askew and Ellis, 2005). Building a better educational experience already exists on campus. By involving faculty in the process, we can improve the experience by streamlining resources, strengths, and expertise (Dungy, 2005). Faculty and student affairs work can be intentional in the delivery of programs, services, and the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom.

Learning efficacy increases in a seamless environment (Whitt and others, 2008; Fried, 2007). Students do not learn in a vacuum, and they do not separate class from participation in student activities or work/life. Transformative and experiential learning incorporates multimodalities of learning (Kolb, 1981; Keeling, 2004, 2006). Learning is a full contact sport. Students learn, and are conditioned to think, through discipline-specific processes they carry with them into clubs and organizations, on-campus interactions, and work/life. There is an existing pattern within the campus approach to learning, which is already integrated (Keeling, 2004, 2006; Fried, 2007). The shift from teaching to learning has been discussed in academy and student affairs publications alike (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002; Keeling, 2004, 2006).
Collaborators in Implementing a Strategic Plan

As noted in previous chapters, the process of strategic planning is typically driven by three general questions: Where are we now? Where are we going? and How will we get there? (Askew and Ellis, 2005; Bryson, 1995; Freeman, 2002; Sanders, 1998; Schuh, 2003; Olsen, 2007). To address the first question about current conditions, Chapter Three turned our attention to the institutional mission as a reflection of institutional values. These succinct declarations often provide the values shared throughout campus while honoring the history and founding principles through the perspective of teaching, scholarship, and service. At DePaul University, a discussion with anyone on campus will soon turn toward the mission and values of Vincentian personalism. Other examples of these mission and values are evident in land grant institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and religious or private affiliations. Academic and student affairs staff alike can rally around the common mission and values to create collaboration and camaraderie.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the strategic planning process incorporates a review of principles through an assessment of the environment and the culture as a review and connection to this commonality (Bryson, 1995; Sanders, 1998; Schuh, 2003; Olsen, 2007). Sharing a look at the current conditions helps to focus academic and student affairs staff on the next steps of the strategic planning process. In his book Leading Change, John Kotter (1996) posits that common errors to change include complacency, the lack of a guiding coalition, and underestimating the power of vision. Looking at historical and current conditions can help guide where the process will lead.

Given that both student affairs professionals and faculty members are invested in the success of the institution, the importance of faculty involvement in developing and implementing a strategic plan should not be underestimated. Faculty interaction with the division does not have to wait until later phases of the strategic planning process; there could be many opportunities to include faculty earlier in planning and later in the implementation of the plan. This change from strategic planning to management requires a shift in thinking about collaboration and working together. This looks at the incorporation of goals and priorities with execution (Olsen, 2007). The partnerships of student affairs and faculty fostered in the “Where are we now?” and “Where are we going?” will take on a different view at this point. The shift from thinking and planning to making it happen will illustrate where the expertise of student affairs professionals and the faculty starts to coalesce. There can be a struggle of returning to the status quo and the path of least resistance to making the changes part of a new paradigm.
What Is Important to Faculty

In order to engage faculty in the process of strategic planning, it is important for student affairs professionals to be aware of the academic triad of teaching, scholarship, and service. Faculty members are constantly evaluating their current and future activities to determine alignment with these tenure and promotion categories (Boice, 2000; Lucas and Murray, 2002). This paradigm seems heightened in the first six years of the traditional tenure-track contract. Student affairs professionals will gain the attention of a faculty member if the suggested collaboration demonstrates an understanding of the professor’s world through teaching, scholarship, and service. Make no mistake: the faculty are thinking about it, and it will be noted that the staff member has done his or her homework and has respect for the promotion and tenure process.

Teaching. This seems to be the most visible function of the faculty member on campus. The classroom demeanor and the reputation of a professor are general topics of conversation among students as they negotiate their degree programs. This reputation may spill over in conversations with student affairs staff. Some interaction may occur with the faculty through their subject matter expertise to integrate their knowledge into campus programming and services.

Scholarship. These contributions to the body of knowledge include research, presenting at conferences, writing articles and books, and securing external funding. This aspect of being a professor is generally what initially led many people into doctoral-level training. A faculty member’s research trajectory and information dissemination further develop his or her expertise. Depending on the type of institution, the focus between teaching and scholarship may shift between first and second priority. The distinction between primary and secondary could be a very fine line.

Service. It is expected that a faculty member will serve on committees and projects at the department, college, university, field, discipline, and community levels. This bodes well for the division of student affairs in recruiting help on a strategic planning task force or committee. The list of service opportunities for faculty members seems endless and can easily consume a professor’s time and energy. For this reason, the first reaction of many faculty will be to reject participation. But an initial request from the student affairs professional that combines service with opportunities for research or publishing could speed the recruiting process along nicely.

Involving Faculty in the Process

In the following sections, ideas for involving faculty members in the general process of strategic planning are explored with a particular focus on how each aspect of planning can be directly linked to teaching, scholarship, and service. Faculty and student affairs administrators need to work
together to sustain and improve their institutions of higher education and meet the needs of students and the scrutiny of external publics (Pace, Blumenreich, and Merkle, 2006; Dungy, 2005; Whitt and others, 2008; Newton and Smith, 2008). The implementation of a student affairs strategic plan will eventually affect most, if not all, areas of campus. Contacting faculty members with research and expertise in complementary areas creates a possible collaboration. In some cases, the faculty member may reach out to inquire about helping or working together. However, it is probably safe to think that faculty will assume the university already has a process or procedure in place. It is a rare occurrence that faculty members are not interested in creating opportunities for additional research, presentations, and publications. The win-win situation for student affairs is depth and breadth for campus initiatives in national journals that could include multiple disciplines. Student affairs should take the lead to invite faculty into their process. At this point, they have the ball.

**Step One: Where Are We Now?** Very early in the strategic planning process, it would behoove the division to identify additional participants in the process (Askev and Ellis, 2005; Freeman, 2002; Schuh, 2003; Bryson, 1995). Creating an institutional database that identifies the research interests and publication trajectories of the faculty could be a powerful outreach tool for the student affairs division. In many cases, public relations departments maintain a list of campus experts for media and outreach purposes.

Engaging faculty as early as possible could enhance the overall methodologies of the strategic plan (Keeling, Wall, Underhile, and Dungy, 2008; Creswell, 1994). While this might not be the strength of the student affairs professional, it is one of the skills of the professoriate. Seeking consultation on how to design a research or assessment can would create a useful partnership with faculty members. The anticipated plan could involve existing data or new data collection that could fit qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods analyses. At times, the anticipated methods could require data collection from human subjects, which likely would have to be submitted to the institutional review board for approval. Overlooking this detail could jeopardize future publications.

Other aspects the faculty may offer to overall, or subordinate, strategic plans are research questions and a theoretical perspective. A focused research question with a serious analysis of theory and methodology creates operational and productive assessment or research plans (Creswell, 1994; Keeling, Underhile, and Dungy, 2008; Onwugbuzie and Leech, 2006).

This approach to teamwork could model the transformational learning process and provide mutual support for everyone. One article or conference presentation that could emanate here is about the process. An example is from my own association with the campus leadership institute as the faculty scholar. In this situation, the three key staff members (associate vice
president, director, and faculty member) all started to keep field notes about the process for potential articles and presentations in the future. Although formal dissemination of these scholarly endeavors may not come to fruition, those early notes and observations would be lost without this foresight. Furthermore, this could result in a lost opportunity for increased communication and collaboration.

Step Two: Where Are We Going? In fact, collaboration is already working in many ways on campus, so the move to focusing on strategic plans is an additional connection. Engaging student affairs partners who are working in such activities as recruiting trips, first-year-experience programs, and orientation would be perfect for members of the strategic planning task force (Gardner, 1986, 2009; Newton and Smith, 2008). Cathy Small (2005), a college professor returning to college to reacquaint herself with her students and get a renewed perspective, provided interesting insights into the potential of collaboration among faculty. In My Freshman Year (2005), she posits that faculty need to work with their student affairs counterparts. Finally, the Beloit Mindset which describes the 18-year-olds life experiences in comparison to those of us over 30 years old published for the past ten years, is a collaborative effort between a faculty member and a student affairs professional. These and other possibilities for collaboration are more than just having a joint program or combining the programs of two departments into the same event (Newton and Smith, 2008).

Using the faculty talent will require that the student affairs division expand its sphere of influence from traditional higher education administration and student personnel programs. The faculty in these programs are natural resources due to common purpose and a general understanding of student services. But there are other experts who could challenge the division's thinking and add to the larger picture of the strategic plan. Referring to the media experts list to identify business faculty who conduct research on strategic planning, management, and organizational development would yield ideal consultants. Recruiting faculty from psychology or counseling programs to create and lead focus groups and surveys could result in expert facilitation by trained professionals. These disciplines study and train students in the art of facilitation, group dynamics, and group process. This is a natural way of communicating and working with people for those in the helping professions. The editor for the professional journal titled Specialists in Group Work may reside on your campus. There may be faculty members who conduct research in the areas of appreciative inquiry that could change the culture of student affairs from, “What do we need to fix?” to celebrating what the division does well. In his book Good to Great (2001), Collins calls this appreciation for what an organization does well “hedgehog attributes.” This may create an approach that moves the organization from good to great.

Student affairs professionals have done outstanding work in the areas of leadership development. There could be other leadership scholars (for
example, in business, history, leadership studies, political science, and public administration) on campus who could help expand this area from the tried-and-true leadership topics and approaches shared at National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel Association conferences. The topic of leadership development has a reciprocal benefit for those same faculty members. By exposing the many disciplines that teach leadership, student affairs could provide those professors with additional resources to be included in their classrooms and assignments. This is a prime example of the integrated learning Fried (2007) suggests in her work. This experiential process could expand the teaching aspects that are so important to faculty members (Keeling, 2004, 2005; Kolb, 1981). The mutual benefits of planning the future of the division will gain momentum through the creation of a coalition and a common vision (Bryson, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Olsen, 2007; Schuh, 2003). This combined planning process creates energy through collaboration and can move the process toward implementation and develop management for change (Bryson, 1995).

**Step Three: How Will We Get There?** Sustaining change is part of the frustration in implementing the strategic planning process (Bryson, 1995; Freeman, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Olsen, 2007; Schuh, 2003). Executed properly, this process takes time. The discussion about the plan and the goals will be exciting at first. It then has the potential to become monotonous and tedious. Including more partners in the process can help create more buy-in and ownership in the planning, which will lead to stronger programs in the end (Askev and Ellis, 2005). Partnerships between faculty and student affairs can grow organically along the route rather than waiting for later. Recruiting faculty to work with and train student affairs professionals may also be a way to increase morale and energy along the way. Involving accounting and finance faculty will help the division with budgeting and fiscal management, as addressed in Chapter Five. Other areas that could be of benefit to student affairs professionals are marketing, advertising, and public relations. It is important to engage experts who train future industry leaders to assist in the student affairs educational process. Other areas within the college of education might include special education professors to enhance the important work happening in campus disability resource centers.

Returning to the academic triad of teaching, scholarship, and service may also provide some incentives for student affairs professionals. Working with faculty on an assessment or research protocol could result in publications that will record and disseminate the important work happening on campus. These articles can also translate into educational sessions at national and regional conferences. In many cases, the way for student affairs professionals and faculty to attend conferences is through presentations. Recruiting faculty to attend student affairs conferences is another way to develop future partnerships and programs. Faculty members will
enjoy expanding their research trajectory and adding to their record for personal and professional reasons.

**Mars and Venus Reconsidered**

In the same way that couples can improve their communication with one another after they gain insights into how the other thinks, the same can be true for student affairs professionals and faculty members. In order for academics to be truly engaged and involved in developing and implementing a strategic plan alongside their student affairs colleagues, understanding how the other thinks is the first step in creating collaborative relationships.

Recently a faculty colleague and I were discussing a pending research project she was developing with a campus student affairs department. She is an educational sociologist and was excited about the prospect of working with new colleagues in the university. She made a comment that when she referred to the student affairs activities as *extracurricular*, the student affairs professional helped her with the more appropriate term of *cocurricular*. This professor said, "That was a pivotal moment for me," and she went on to explain a textbook example of why the term *cocurricular* was more appropriate. It was an exciting moment to discuss the field of student affairs with a faculty member and for her to explain how student affairs contributes to the learning process.

The landscape of higher education is changing as institutions use strategic planning to refine and coordinate the delivery of programs, services, and academics. Collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs is now essential to survival (Dungy, 2005; Newton and Smith, 2008). Higher education will continue to be driven by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, and increased demands for accountability (Dungy, 2005; Fried, 2007; Gardner, 2004, 2009; Newton and Smith, 2008; Whitt and others, 2008), which suggests the importance of student services strategic planning. It is imperative that institutions deliver on the promises made in their mission statements and recruitment brochures. Sanford (1967) addressed the campus as a whole in addressing the needs of the student when he presented his ideas and theories. He was a faculty member working in his field when he decided to research and write on colleges and college students. He posited that learning was fostered through "teachers" and the "educational community" through challenge and support.

Perhaps it is time to turn that popular theory back on our own campus settings. How can student services challenge faculty colleagues to improve delivery methods? Too much challenge, and we continue to deepen the divide. Not enough of that challenge will result in the status quo and a lack of immediacy. The crux of the dilemma lies in the support. It is about strengthening relationships and fostering communication between Mars and Venus. Powerful partnerships require supporting each other in creating
that idyllic environment that improves our cocurricular teaching, our combined scholarship, and our collective service to stakeholders.

References


---

*RICH WHITNEY* is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Special Education's college student development program at DePaul University.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICES • DOI: 10.1007/fm