

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A. Definition and Recognition of Base Units

A base unit, a term used for institutional strategic planning purposes only in the process monitored by the University Planning and Budgeting Committee, is defined as the smallest unit which receives any support from the University and is, therefore, included in the strategic planning process. The following are base units:

1. Academic Departments;
2. Subdivisions of Student Affairs; Academic Affairs; Finance & Administration; Institutional Advancement; and Office of Human Resources.
3. Organizations such as centers, institutes and clinics seeking permanent University status. Organizations such as centers, institutes, and clinics may receive University support for up to one year for the purpose of planning and development. The organizational unit that is sponsoring a new center, institute, or clinic shall report to the UPBC that the planning process has begun. After one year, the new center, institute, or clinic shall seek formal approval from the UPBC. After the one-year planning period, receipt of support such as personnel, space, and/or financial resources, will be contingent upon formal administrative recognition.

Base units are granted formal recognition by the President after he has received recommendations from:

- a. The department(s) or administrative unit(s) involved.
- b. The University Planning & Budgeting Committee.
- c. The University Senate.

Organizations such as centers, institutes, and clinics must have bylaws reviewed by the University Senate before the Senate makes a recommendation to the President.

Existing center shall also have their bylaws reviewed by the Senate, which shall make recommendations to the University.

The President may then request formal approval by the Board of Trustees.

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Admin. Approval: Mar. 28, 1985
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B. Procedure for Recognizing Base Units

The department(s) or administrative unit(s) involved would submit reports to the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC) which would study the matter. The UPBC would then report to the University Senate which would examine all aspects of the matter and make a recommendation to the University President.

Admin. Approval: Mar. 28, 1985

C. Role of Governance and Strategic Planning

1. Identical terminology will be used to describe budgetary units and strategic planning units, such as base units and organizational units.
2. Base unit budget requests will be appended to organizational unit budgets and both will

reflect the Strategic Plan.

3. Both the budget and the Strategic Plan will be divided by categories (personnel, other expenses, equipment, etc.)
4. The base unit budgets and the organization unit budgets will be forwarded to the University and Budgeting Committee for information purposes only at the same time that they are forwarded to the University vice presidents and the University Senate.

Admin. Approval: July 3, 1986

D. Definition of a Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning is the process by which an organization determines what it wants to become and the means by which it achieves those ends. George Keller, in his seminal book entitled *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in Higher Education (1983)* provides some thoughtful comments on the nature of strategic planning in higher education. His observations are useful as the University begins the process of constructing a strategic plan. Keller argues that:

“Academic strategic decision making means that a college, school, or university and its leaders are active rather than passive about their position in history. To think strategically is to look intensely at contemporary history and your institution’s position in it and work on the planning process that actively confronts the historical movement, overcomes it, gets on top of it, or seizes opportunities latent in it. A campus with an academic strategy has a battle plan to get stronger and better in the teeth of historical conditions...Strategic thinking leads one into being an active defender, analyzer, or prospector, rather than a passive reactor.”

Strategic planning and management, other observe, has been defined as:

1. Setting goals that match institutional activities, competencies, and resources with the external environment’s present and future opportunities, demands, and risks.
2. Formulating alternative courses of short-term and long-term action for achieving goals.
3. Selecting and implementing a best course of action.
4. Directing and coordinating resources and activities to help assure successful performances.
5. Evaluating results to ensure that goals are met; and
6. Monitoring the appropriateness of the course of action and the necessity for modifications.¹

Such a process provides an excellent framework for re-engineering the management environment. Strategic planning models call for periodic analyses of the external environment, institutional strengths and weaknesses, and institutional values. Matching opportunities/constraints, strengths/weaknesses, and values enhances a university’s ability to develop more responsible mission and goals statements and more appropriately, to link planning and budgeting. This institutional strategy is reinforced with a functional approach delineated in tactical plans, e.g., academic plan, financial plan, computing plan, etc. Finally, operational strategy is presented in unit plans which define actions to be taken within a budget cycle which, over time, result in the accomplishment of institutional goals.²

¹ Mark Meredith, Robert G. Cope, and Oscar T. Lenning, “Differentiating *bona fide* Strategic Planning from Other Planning,” a study paper, May 1987, p.3.

² James M. Rosser and James I. Penrod, “Strategic Planning and Management: A Methodology for Responsible Change”, *The Journal of Library Administration*, 1992.

E. Assumptions

The strategic plan at Western Connecticut State University is firmly anchored in the priorities, values, and aspirations defined in the current Statement of Mission.

F. Strategic Planning Process

The five-year strategic plan is biennially cyclic, and reflects the following process.

1. Campus-wide discussions about the nature of strategic planning and the specific assumptions which underscore the development of the plan.
2. Significant involvement of the University Planning and Budget Committee, the Academic Council, and the University Cabinet in the development of the plan.

G. The Role of the University Planning and Budget Committee (UPBC)

The University Planning and Budget Committee plays a critical role in the development and ongoing refinement of the University's strategic plan. The committee's responsibilities include:

1. The provision of a forum for discussion and debate about the assumptions of the Plan and the process by which it is developed.
2. The monitoring and review of the plan's execution in consultation with the President, the Vice Presidents, the Deans, the departments, and appropriate governance committees.
3. The provision of data which result from the University's ongoing assessment program.
4. Constant review and updating of the University's priorities.
5. The provision of a mechanism for evaluating whether or not the University should pursue new ideas or programs in light of its mission and priorities.