

Strategies for Change: Moving Forward with the College Strategic Plan

Draft for discussion, updated 6-14-05

To facilitate implementation of the 2005-2008 college strategic plan, the deans are adopting a staged approach that includes a communication plan, an “excellence in higher education” self-assessment, the integration of unit planning and stakeholder feedback, and the establishment of a joint review and reprioritization mechanism.

1. College-Wide Communication

A college website for use in posting implementation updates is complete, and the first implementation updates were posted in April 2005 at www.cas.psu.edu/strategicplanning/. Systematic communication regarding implementation progress is crucial to enable synchronization of programs, priorities, and goals throughout the college and additional mechanisms should be established. For example, leadership team meetings could be used as opportunities for substantive discussion about change issues with discussion results shared via a college intranet.

2. Excellence in Higher Education Self-Assessment

In early May 2005 deans and administrative unit leaders met with Dr. Brent Ruben to compare our college’s strategic plan against the best practices in the Excellence in Higher Education (EHE) framework. The EHE framework is a version of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award that has been customized for research universities by Dr. Brent Ruben, distinguished professor of communication and executive director of the Center for Organizational Development and Leadership at Rutgers University.

EHE is comprised of seven interrelated categories of leadership, strategic planning, beneficiaries & constituencies, programs & services, faculty/staff and workplace, assessment & information use, and outcomes & achievements. A self-assessment using this framework enables one to view an organization as a system that can be enhanced through processes affecting change, e.g., internal communication, stakeholder communication, collaboration, resource allocation, decision-making, faculty hiring, assessment, and program improvement. Positive change and growth is stimulated through the integration of assessment, planning, improvement, reporting, and budgeting processes.

Comparing our college’s strategic plan against the EHE framework facilitated the identification of short term and longer term priorities that when implemented should have a significant impact on goal achievement. **Four short term priorities were identified to be completed at the college level between now and December 1, 2005 including college marketing, curriculum revision, assessment, and IT evaluation.** Action plans are currently being finalized for each short term priority; in the case of curriculum revision a project has been started for the undergraduate environmental programs and one additional project will be started for graduate plant science programs.

Top-Priority Short Term Strategies for Implementation

1. Implement communications and marketing effort to internal and external audiences to enhance resources including top quality faculty.
2. Enhance student programs to identify strengths, overlaps, and synergies with the goal of identifying excellent programs that build on disciplinary depth and interdisciplinary breadth. Start with undergraduate environmental programs and graduate plant science programs.
3. Build an information base for decision making and assessment of outcomes.
4. Assess information technology solutions to clarify the current situation.

Priority Longer Term Strategies for Implementation

These will be reviewed and re-prioritized in late 2005 following receipt of recommendations from the summer 2005 study groups and unit plans.

1. Using marketing research, create a college-wide marketing communication plan that identifies audiences and priorities and clear, consistent messages.
2. Prepare students to be leaders in carrying forward the mission, vision & values of the College.
3. Grow the College's supportive & inclusive work/learning environment to support teamwork, collaboration & integration within the College, University, & Land-Grant system.
4. Invest in e-Learning to reach new audiences (inside/outside PSU; inside/outside PA) and to enhance learning through innovative approaches.
5. Enhance student (undergrad, graduate, extension) learning through dynamic experiences (e.g., research, international, internships, conducting outreach programs) to produce graduates with cultural awareness, real-world experience, and leadership capacity.
6. Enhance partnerships with current and newly identified stakeholders.
7. Enhance recognition, reporting, and distribution of the impact of programs and services and identify new venues & mechanisms for disseminating impact information.
8. Create a culture where leaders provide for "courageous" acts of change.
9. Reallocate College resources toward strategic priorities to achieve excellence in key program areas.
10. Diversify and enhance the college's funding portfolio to ensure adequate resources for strategic change.
11. Increase funding through development efforts to provide long-term financial stability for priority programs.
12. Enhance research commercialization to translate newly discovered knowledge into relevant practical applications.
13. Articulate commitment & provide tools for ongoing planning & assessment.
14. Analyze & use information from stakeholders to enhance programs & services – share assessment information broadly.
15. Define & implement reporting of progress on implementation.

16. Consolidate IT solutions to achieve college-wide (UP & Counties) efficiencies (e.g., cost savings, reliability, and consistency) and provide new opportunities (e.g., collaborations, program delivery).

3. Unit Planning and External Stakeholder Conversations

Unit plans were due to the dean on June 1, 2005 and over the summer and early fall deans are holding discussions with each unit to provide initial feedback.

During April 2005 we asked the Ag Council, PCCEA, and Alumni Society to indicate their priorities within the 2005-2008 plan, and also to identify ways in which they wish to partner with the college for implementation. We will use future regularly-scheduled meetings with external stakeholders as a venue for discussions about strategic priorities.

4. Regular Progress Checks and Periodic Reprioritization

Summer 2005 study groups are expected to begin work in July. Progress reviews will be held in August and September at AULs/Deans/Staff meetings, and initial study group recommendations will be presented later in the fall.

By taking advantage of the ongoing nature of college strategic planning we will be able to periodically reprioritize strategies and update resource allocation decisions. Recommendations from the summer 2005 study group looking at building an information base for college level decision making should facilitate the reprioritization and allocation.