STRATEGIC PLANNING AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BRANCH CAMPUS: A TOOLKIT FOR
BRANCH CAMPUS LEADERS

by

Allison M. Fitzpatrick

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Has been approved

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APPROVED:

joyce gillie-gossom, EdD_____
Committee Chair

Sandra Balkema, PhD_____
Committee Member

Dennis Huffman, DA_____
Committee Member

Dissertation Committee

ACCEPTED:

Sandra J Balkema, PhD, Dissertation Director_____
Community College Leadership Program

ABSTRACT

Community college branch campuses have experienced significant changes and challenges in recent years. Competition with online learning to educate place-bound students has impacted enrollments. As a result, branch campus leaders must think strategically about the branch's position and purpose in the local community.

Since many branch campus leaders are stretched for time and resources, planning often takes a backseat while more urgent matters are addressed. This product dissertation provides a strategic planning guide for community college branch campus leaders that will give them the toolkit they need to lead an inclusive planning process with limited resources and expertise. In addition, worksheets and templates specific to community branch campus needs are included in the toolkit to assist with the planning process.

Keywords: branch campus, community college, strategic planning, leadership, toolkit

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions nationwide have experienced significant changes and challenges in recent years. These challenges are magnified for community college branch campuses which are now competing with online learning as a way to educate place-bound students. In addition, the students served by branch campuses were some of the most vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. To remain competitive, branch campus leaders must think strategically and plan for a new future of higher education.

Branch campus leaders juggle multiple priorities and responsibilities and rarely specialize in strategic planning (gillie gossom & Pelton, 2011). This product dissertation provides a strategic planning guide for community college branch campus leaders that will give them the toolkit they need to lead an inclusive planning process with limited resources and expertise.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

History

Planning in higher education is evident as far back as the founding of the first institution of higher education (Thelin, 2011). The formal planning movement outside of higher education began in 1893, with the first courses offered in 1909. The notion of formal planning was first accepted in the 1920s, and the first graduate program in planning began in 1923. After the Great Depression, planning was instrumental in improving economic outcomes nationally (Mathew et al., 2020). The term "strategic planning" was first used in the 1940s by several

authors, making the term generally accepted in the planning realm (Chaffee, 1985). Strategic planning methodology began sometime in the mid-20th century, with no single identifiable event of origin.

Strategic planning in higher education is a relatively new concept, introduced into colleges and universities in the 1960s. In 1966, the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) was founded with a base membership of 300. During that time, they had an emphasis on facility and physical planning. In the 1970s, colleges and universities saw much unsteadiness with increasing costs and wavering public support, bringing strategic planning to the forefront for many leaders in higher education. George Keller's "Academic Strategy" marks a pivotal shift in strategic planning, as during that time, the concept of planning was used as an orderly and systematic tool to advance the academic enterprise (Keller, 1983). The 1990s saw a stronger emphasis on strategic planning by the regional accrediting bodies for higher education institutions. It was seen as a key piece of institutional effectiveness, and the 1998 Council for Higher Education Accreditation's Recognition Standards relayed expectations for the "evidence of policies and procedures that stress planning and implementing strategies for change" (Dooris et al., 2004, p. 7). By 2000, SCUP membership had increased exponentially to 4200, and the scope of the organization expanded into broader areas of planning, including governance, budgeting, endowment management, and others (Dooris et al., 2004). Over the past few decades, strategic planning in higher education has continued to gain momentum.

Definition and Characteristics

Kotler and Murphy defined strategic planning as "the process of developing and maintaining a strategic fit between the organization and its changing marketing opportunities"

(1981, p. 471). Traditionally, the planning process looks something like this: analysis of the environment, review of resources, goal setting, strategy development, internal changes to support strategy, and a regular review cycle to ensure progress toward goals (Kotler & Murphy, 1981). However, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, more modern planning incorporates different components, which set out to address some criticism of the inflexibility of the process that was seen in previous models.

To be effective, to be efficient, and to maintain a connection with the mission of higher education, a strategic planning process should be market-focused, inclusive, flexible, data-informed, intentional, and actionable. The product presented in this dissertation will operationalize these characteristics.

Criticisms

Strategic planning in higher education has been criticized on many levels. Some initiatives were seen as too linear, too focused on hard data, too cumbersome, and too structured, ignoring vital pieces such as organizational culture (Dooris, 2002). Others have criticized strategic planning for using corporate tools and using consultants or external constituencies to develop the plan (Mathew et al., 2020)

Currently, there is no empirical research study that supports the efficacy of strategic planning in higher education (Dooris et al., 2004). At this point in time, successes with strategic planning are anecdotal, as planning in a higher education environment is incredibly complex and dynamic. Unlike strategic planning in business, which can tend to be more top-down, planning in higher education is more inclusive, which makes for an environment that is more complex and difficult to parse out measurable effects (Chaffee, 1985). It is challenging to find

the specific effects of planning versus the effects of other factors such as leadership, demographic changes, fluctuations in funding, and other external forces that impact the success of colleges and their branch campuses.

BRANCH CAMPUSES

History

The notion of branch campuses dates back to the days of Thomas Jefferson, who envisioned college campuses as easily accessible to residents of Virginia, within a day's ride of their homes (Dengerink, 2001). By the end of World War II, there were 33 campus locations for undergraduate institutions located away from the main, parent campus. By 1950, that number had grown to 87 (Schindler, 1952). Now, 70 years later, that number has grown exponentially.

In the early years of branch campuses, many sites opened to meet a local college enrollment problem. As veterans sought higher education, parent campuses were challenged with insufficient space to handle the influx of new students. As a result, branch campuses were founded to gain additional space to handle additional students (Schindler, 1952). As branches expanded, so did the reasons why they were founded. Some colleges added them to increase overall access for adult students. Others wanted to increase brand recognition or to cover an assigned service area (Krueger et al., 2011). Colleges also added branch campuses to serve completely different audiences than they served on the main campus: part-time, evening, or adult. This allowed them to generate new revenue while also possibly blocking expansion from a competitor institution (Bird, 2011).

The definition of a branch campus is often debated, as some informally refer to any offsite location of an institution as a branch campus. However, the United States Department of Education in the Higher Education Act of 1965 defines a branch campus as "An additional location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution" (United States Department of Education, 2010, sec. 600.2). To be considered independent, a branch campus should be permanent, credential conferring, have its own faculty and administration, and have financial/budgetary oversight. This is the generally accepted definition that is utilized by regional accreditors.

Bebko and Huffman use a similar definition to the United States Department of Education with the added element of a wide variety of student support services (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). Bird uses an analogous definition but notes that not all services available on the parent campus will be replicated at the branch, notably intercollegiate athletics, student health services, or residence halls, which require significant resources. In addition, Bird notes that curriculum authority is usually held by the parent campus, particularly for the expansion of programs or courses (2011, 2014).

Historically, branch campuses were autonomous and separate from the main campus. Prior to the utilization of email and other rapid, written communication, campuses were decentralized and had their own unique culture. More immediate forms of communication led to more consistency across multiple locations of a college or university and allowed the main campus to exert more power than in the past (Miller, 2013). The autonomous nature of the branch campus has allowed them the opportunity to connect closely with the community and

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has given them the flexibility to respond to the needs of local businesses and community

members (Norby, 2005).

It is challenging to assemble a usual profile of a branch campus, as there is little

commonality across institutions. There is broad diversity in the size, location, and number of

students served at a particular campus (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). Some may be located

independently, and others may be co-located with other colleges and universities. There are

varying missions across colleges as well, with some founded to grow the brand and others to

increase revenue. However, there is one common thread across all branch campuses, and that

is their proximity to students in their local community. No matter the size or structure, all

branch campuses improve access for students who cannot travel to a parent campus for their

education.

Educational Access

While many of the reasons a college or university might build a branch campus revolve

around the needs of the main campus, there is no doubt the presence of a branch campus

allows better access for students who are place-bound or may not otherwise have an

opportunity to participate in higher education. According to Bird, "An existing institution

establishes a branch campus in order to make higher education more readily accessible to

people where they live and work" (2014, p. 25). These students experience challenges accessing

higher education that is traditional, residential, or far from home. Many cannot relocate to

meet their educational goals, so the existence of branch campuses has filled the local need for

education in many communities (Dengerink, 2001). Donhardt asserted that branch campus

students chose their location primarily for proximity to home or work, with 40 minutes as the

maximum amount of time they were willing to travel to get to class (1996). It is this close

proximity that allows students who might not otherwise be able to achieve a college or

university degree to do so.

Branch campus students often fall into the "nontraditional" category because of their

need to juggle multiple priorities- commuting to campus, schoolwork, employment, and

family— regardless of their age (Bird, 2014). This population does not fit a typical or traditional

student model (Krueger et al., 2011).

Leadership

Like branch campus students, branch campus leaders do not fit a typical model either. In

the world of higher education, there is no straightforward path to being a branch campus

leader. Administrators can come from a variety of backgrounds, moving up through

administrative or faculty ranks, or even coming from the private sector. Leaders can have

various skill sets, not all of which include a background in strategic planning. Moreover, there is

no universal title for the leader of a branch campus. Leaders can have titles including vice

chancellor, dean, vice provost, vice president, campus director, and others (Shaw & Bornhoft,

2011).

Typically, the branch campus leader is a generalist, not specializing in any one facet of

the institution, instead knowing a little bit about each area to ensure the campus can operate

smoothly. They are pulled in various directions, not always able to focus large amounts of time

on any one task at one time. Branch campus leaders are normally responsible for academic

affairs, student affairs, and operations. While their peers on the main campus will specialize in

one area, branch campus administrators must focus on all three areas, often at the same time.

Gillie gossom and Pelton (2011) equated this to a ringmaster in a three-ring circus, trying to keep three different operations running at the same time. In addition to internal relationships with branch and main campus colleagues and students, the branch campus leader must sustain external relationships with businesses and community members to ensure they have community support while also keeping a pulse on the community to know how the branch can meet various community needs (gillie gossom & Pelton, 2011).

Challenges and Threats

Since the inception of branch campuses, their leaders have dealt with significant challenges and threats. As far back as 1952, Schindler talks about struggles for control between the main and branch campuses, a noted lack of resources, and challenges related to budget and allocation of funds (Schindler, 1952). Nearly 70 years later, branch campuses still deal with many of the same issues. It appears that the time is ripe for branch campuses to make changes to finally address them.

There is regular confusion or disagreement regarding the place of the branch campus in the overall institution. What purpose does it serve? Why is it important? Why can't students just complete their classes at the main campus? As time goes on, it is possible for the branch and the main campus to get used to the branch being a consistent entity. However, during challenging budget times, the branch can be first on the chopping block if the college administrators do not understand the purpose of the branch and how it fits into the overall picture, contributing to the bottom line. It is vital for branch campus leaders to work collaboratively with colleagues on the main campus to ensure that they understand how each entity supports the other and leads to their own success (Shaw & Bornhoft, 2011).

Branch campuses have been threatened due to the shift from on-campus classes to remote learning. This challenge first came to light over a decade ago when Bird questioned how the future of higher education was going to impact branch campuses (2011). These conversations have again resurfaced with declining enrollments as well as the shift to remote classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. If the purpose of the branch is to provide access to place-bound students, then what happens when courses are more readily accessible? Does the branch still serve the same purpose in the overall structure of the college? Branch campuses need to consider their position in the realm of higher education and determine how these changes will impact their future.

Branch Campus Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is vital to the future success of community college branch campuses. A plan can help communicate to the community "who we are as well as who we aspire to be and how we plan to get there" (Ponder, 2009, p. 29).

Though a master strategic plan likely exists for the main campus, it is unlikely that it focuses specifically on the needs of the branch, its community, and its particular student population. There are many times when the needs of the branch's local community and what best serves the larger institution are not aligned. An institution that operates in multiple branches should use different strategic techniques in each branch (Kotler & Murphy, 1981). Having a specific strategic plan for the branch campus allows it to better align goals and priorities with community needs (Bird, 2011). Decisions that require knowledge of the local community should be made at the branch and should be reflected in the strategic plan, since programs, scheduling, and services need to be aligned with local student needs (Bird, 2014).

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A branch campus strategic plan will help clarify the connection between campus goals and institutional goals, establishing the branch's importance and contributions to the overall organization (Ponder, 2009). Strategic planning also helps a branch establish its place in the community. It helps ensure that the programmatic offerings align with the needs of the surrounding area. Having the right program, at the right price, and with the right support services is critical to attracting students and ensuring future enrollment (Bird, 2011). With a continuously changing environment, and various threats to their future, the use of the strategic planning process at a branch campus will help its leaders better understand how the campus fits into the future of the region as well as the institution (Bird, 2014).

PROJECT FOCUS AND PURPOSE

Strategic planning has many benefits for institutions of higher education, specifically branch campuses. A plan helps the campus community move in one direction toward the same set of goals. Plans can also help communicate to the community at large, as well as to supporters like donors and public officials, what projects and accomplishments the college is working towards as it seeks to gain their support (Mintzberg, 1994). Many institutions, and particularly their branch campuses, are not strategic in nature. They address operations with a short-term focus, doing the same things day after day. The strategic planning process can help guide leaders into a more proactive, longer-term, systematic focus on change (Kotler & Murphy, 1981).

Branch campus administrators are not specialists in strategic planning and constantly juggle multiple priorities (gillie gossom & Pelton, 2011). They often deal with budget challenges and may not have the level of personnel that it normally would take to go through a normal

strategic planning process. This product dissertation provides a guide for branch campus leaders that will assist them in leading a strategic planning process, both effectively and efficiently, with limited resources. It is practitioner-focused and most applicable at community college branch campuses. While the specific focus is community college branch campuses, the product could be adapted for use at universities and/or locations that are not as autonomous as a branch campus, such as satellites or additional locations.

The strategic planning guide will help make that process as efficient and straightforward as possible. It will help administrators focus on the future and on strategy instead of only focusing on the fires in front of them on a day-to-day basis. In addition, this product will help branch campus leaders identify ways they can meet the needs of their local community and help cement their place. It will help leaders identify the ways the branch fits into the overall mission and vision of the larger institution, as well as the ways the branch operation contributes to the bottom line.

As there is an overabundance of research and literature on strategic planning at large, this dissertation will focus on strategic planning for higher education, specifically the models that are most relevant to this product. Planning models and components were chosen because they are effective within higher education and are simple enough for application at a branch location.

SIGNIFICANCE

In general, branch campuses are not well documented with reliable research. In addition, there are so many differences in branch campus characteristics that one cannot assume that one branch is similar to another (Krueger et al., 2011). There are very few

resources for best practices when it comes to branch campuses (gillie gossom & Pelton, 2011).

Research has largely ignored branch campuses, and further research is needed to fully

understand the needs of our branches nationally (Bebko & Huffman, 2011). Only one piece of

information was available specifically related to branch campus strategic planning, and there

was nothing discoverable for community college branch campus strategic planning. The

strategic planning guides specific to higher education and nonprofits were not well-geared

toward branch campuses, as they were highly complex or lacked the specific tools required for

branch campus planning. This dissertation will help develop the body of research for

community college branch campuses and provide a guide that meets the specific needs of

branch campus leaders.

ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter One, the Introduction, provides

background information and context, as well as a presentation of the significance of the

product and a summary of the product focus. Chapter Two, the Literature Review, provides an

extensive review of literature related to strategic planning in higher education and branch

campuses. Chapter Three, Approach and Design, provides a deeper dive into the development

of the product, including the framework and strategic planning theories used to develop the

toolkit. Chapter Four, the Toolkit, presents the strategic planning guide that was developed

based on the findings in Chapter Three. Chapter Five, Discussion and Conclusions, provides an

overview of the author's delimitations and recommendations for further product development

and research based on the previous research.

AUTHOR'S DISCLOSURE

I would like to present my previous experience in topics related to this dissertation so that any potential biases can be addressed. I worked in senior leadership at community college regional locations and branch campuses for the past 15 years of my professional career. During this time, I led two institutions through branch campus strategic planning. While both processes looked very different (and one occurred during campus lockdown for COVID), those experiences contributed to my own personal perspective and professional opinions related to branch campus strategic planning. Biases related to these experiences could enter my dissertation work. In addition, my professional opinion, as related to lessons learned through these processes, will be apparent.

In addition, I retained membership in the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) for 15 years and attended many national conferences. I served in several leadership capacities in the organization, including President, President-Elect, Past President, Conference Chair, and Conference Site Host.

As evidenced by my experience, I have dedicated a large portion of my professional career to the success of branch campuses. I am a supporter of their overall mission of access for students who may not otherwise be able to access higher education. I have seen that there is little research available on branch campuses in general, though the body of work is growing. This dissertation contributes to the advancement of community college branch campuses nationwide.

CONCLUSION

In a post-COVID world, higher education, and particularly community college branch campuses, are seeing challenges as they continue to compete for enrollment. A strategic plan is vital for them to determine their place in the current market while establishing goals and strategies that help them get there. While resources are challenged, a resource-light toolkit can help branch campus leaders carry out the strategic planning process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This section will provide an overview of the literature relevant to the product,

particularly strategic planning theories, elements and models, and strategic planning guides

already in existence.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The formal planning movement that began in 1923 laid a foundation for strategic

planning in higher education (Mathew et al., 2020). Though planning was underway for several

decades before the term strategic planning was first used in the 1940s, the concept did not take

hold in the business realm until over a decade later (Chaffee, 1985). Key moments in the

development of strategic planning took place in the 1950s and 1960s, around the same time

strategic planning became more prevalent in higher education institutions. In their book on

public housing in Chicago, Meyerson and Banfield presented the rational planning framework,

one of the first publications presenting a formal strategic planning process. The framework was

relatively generic, but the components align with several concepts used in modern strategic

planning: knowledge of alternatives, consequences, and relevant ends, akin to modern

environmental scanning and goal setting (Meyerson & Banfield, 1955). In the 1960s, Chandler

presented case studies of several major businesses that focused on structure as well as

strategy. He is credited with increasing interest in strategic planning in the business world, as

the positive impact of the application of planning could be seen in this work (Chandler, 1962).

Soon after this, more regular planning in higher education took hold.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Strategic planning in higher education was evidenced as early as the founding of the first institution of higher education (Thelin, 2011). The earliest articles about planning in higher education date back to the 1930s and show a focus on curriculum. The Haverford Plan is an early example of higher education strategic planning. Published in 1930, it presented a reflection on planning over 20 years, with a relatively narrow focus on just one academic program- the reorganization of the Latin curriculum (Lockwood, 1930). Also published during the same time was the Harvard Plan, a retrospective look at several narrowly focused plans over 20 years prior. This is one of the earliest publications to present research showing positive results in student outcomes because of strategic planning. The House Plan, 1922-1931, resulted in an increase in the number of men graduating with honors, from 21% to 32% over the nine-year period (Hindmarsh, 1932).

Strategic planning in higher education took hold relatively recently, with its adoption in colleges and universities in the 1960s. In 1966, the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) was founded with a base membership of 300 (Mathew et al., 2020). Colleges and universities were experiencing rapid growth, and planning was highly utilized by leaders as campus footprints grew (Norris & Poulton, 2008). As enrollments declined in the 1970s, institutions of higher education saw revenue shortfalls and needed to be more strategic with resource allocation. Formal planning became more prevalent at various institutions (Norris & Poulton, 2008). During this time, what was formerly known as long-range plans were identified

as strategic plans, formally bringing strategic planning into the lexicon of higher education (Mathew et al., 2020).

Doyle and Lynch (1979) identified three environmental threats that impacted higher education in the 1970s, all of which are still relevant today: demographic shifts, shifts in student demand in various subject areas, and declining public financial support. They noted the increasing value of strategic resources planning due to this challenging environment, as administrators would need to concentrate on the competitiveness of the institution to maintain relevancy in the market. They expressed the importance of long-term planning, as it allowed resource changes to happen more smoothly over a longer period of time.

As institutions saw continued declines in enrollment in the 1980s, strategic planning continued to take hold, and leadership shifted the focus of their planning. More institutions incorporated external partners, like employers and government, into the planning process, and there was a greater focus on outcomes and institutional effectiveness (Norris & Poulton, 1991). Cope (1981) introduced the concept of open-system planning, recognizing the rights of many different constituencies in the planning process of the institution and that the institution was constantly changing. This was evidenced in Cope's primer on strategic planning for higher education, which included the external environment in the planning process. He recommended components such as environmental scanning, which incorporated economic forecasting and political forecasting, as well as marketing. This work helped ensure that institutions of higher education had the data they needed to choose programming that best met the needs of their constituents.

Kotler and Murphy (1981) noted that institutions of higher education are not usually adept at strategic planning. They introduced a systematic and sequential approach in which the goals and assumptions came from the top down, and the detailed plans came from the bottom up. They emphasized the importance of faculty participation in the strategic planning process.

Keller's *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education* (1983) was a turning point in strategic planning in the United States. He showed the need for forward-thinking in higher education, to change and adapt to unstable enrollment, unpredictable financial support, and increasing competition. He delivered a linear model for an orderly and systematic strategic planning process to help leaders advance their institutions. After his work was published, strategic planning in higher education flourished.

The 1990s saw additional changes. Declining public support and continued financial investment in technology meant that institutions needed to better allocate financial resources. Planning became more proactive and less reactive. Additionally, constituents further down in academic in administrative units were involved in the planning process, making the process more inclusive (Norris & Poulton, 2008). The field saw additional changes as leaders shifted their attention from formulation and planning to an increased focus on implementation (Dooris et al., 2004).

Mintzberg (1994) asserted the importance of a less prescriptive planning process, including more creativity and engaging more constituents in the process. He discussed the importance of strategic thinking and cautioned readers not to be so inflexible that vision and creativity are inhibited. He noted the fit of "left-handed planning" for higher education, a method that allows more nimbleness and quicker reactions to environmental changes.

Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) specified two distinct characteristics of strategic planning: it should be proactive, and it should be developed purposefully.

Lerner (1999) noted the importance of every constituency group in every stage of the planning process, as they need to be willing participants not only in planning but also implementation. She encouraged planners to work more as facilitators, guiding and educating constituents about the process and less as decision-makers on what should be included in the plan. The planner's goal is not only to get their input but also to generate a feeling of ownership in the plan. Like others during this time, Lerner (1999) also expressed the importance of flexibility and creativity in the process.

Delprino (2013) incorporated the idea of integrated planning and coordinating plans and goals across various departments in the organization. This approach requires a collaborative environment and resources devoted to this change in the planning process. Achieving harmony across plans ensures that all parts of the organization are moving forward in the same direction, but it can be challenging to implement, as many departments are used to planning independently. The Society for College and University Planning (2019) further developed integrated planning with a framework to help guide all campus planning, linking resources with this mission, vision, and values. Their planning steps differ from others presented, as the vision is developed later in the process, after environmental scanning and analysis and before writing the goals and strategies.

Bryson (2018), in his work targeted at nonprofit organizations, introduced the concept of the Strategy Change Cycle, indicating that it should be a strategic management process, not just a planning process. He encouraged organizational leaders to manage an organization

strategically on an ongoing basis, not just once for the planning process. Like the Society for College and University Planning, Bryson included vision establishment later in the planning process, but he placed it even further down in the process, after the strategic plan was adopted and right before implementation.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLANNING

As a subset of the sector of higher education, community colleges do not experience a great difference in the mechanics of planning from their four-year counterparts. The models and elements of planning are consistent across the sector, but different types of institutions will carry out the planning process in different ways, customizing it to their own needs. Because community colleges are funded locally (county, school district, town, and/or city) and serve local communities, there is greater local interest in their future and success. In addition, the issues facing community colleges differ from those impacting universities- the funding base and the student populations differ significantly. This section will highlight some of the unique characteristics of community college strategic planning.

Casolara et al. (1999) expressed the importance of community involvement during their 1996 strategic planning process at Tompkins Courtland Community College. In an attempt to gain new ideas and bring together participants from a variety of backgrounds, various members of the local community were invited to participate in a "Future Search Conference" to provide input into the college's planning process. External constituents invited to participate included: "donors, funding agencies, governmental agencies, business leaders, alumni, other colleges and universities, law enforcement agencies, and social service agencies"(Casolara et al., 1999, pp. 195–196). The goal of this level of community involvement was to form long-term partnerships

and improve relations with community constituents. Groups were also able to provide information that could help identify needs in the community. The engagement of the local community helps ensure ongoing support for the college. In his case study of strategic planning at College of the Albemarle, Lovik (2014) addressed the unique factors that impact future plans for community colleges, two of which are locally oriented- regional population dynamics and industry demand for skilled employees.

Lovik (2014) also presented multiple lessons learned through the strategic planning process at College of the Albemarle, including recommendations for how one could make improvements in those areas. To generate broader involvement, he recommended improving communication in several different ways: communication at the unit level, open forums for all internal constituency groups, personalized emails from leadership, and internal updates on the planning process, including completed work and timeline. To make the plan more implementable, he recommended frequent internal marketing, incremental steps for implementation (to not frontload everything into the first year), external marketing of the plan, setting a schedule for regular assessment of the plan, and plan adjustment as necessary.

BRANCH CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLANNING

Several authors have expressed the importance of strategic planning at the branch campus in their works. Kotler and Murphy emphasized the need for institutions with multiple locations to use different strategic techniques at each one (1981). Bird asserted that a separate strategic plan for the branch campus allows it to align itself with the local community (2011). In his book *Out on a Limb: A Branch Campus Life,* Bird also discussed the importance of a strategic

plan specific to the branch campus so programs, scheduling, and services are best aligned to the needs of the students served by the branch (2014).

There is a deficit of literature that specifically deals with branch campus strategic planning. Only one discoverable article was published that explicitly addresses strategic planning at branch campuses (Ponder, 2009). Ponder presents a case study of the strategic planning process implemented at the University of North Carolina at Asheville in 2006-2007 during her tenure. She introduces the concept of "Consultative Listening," which is an effective method of conducting strategic planning at a branch campus (either at a community college or a university). This method incorporates inclusivity and ensures full campus participation in the planning process. It also utilizes multiple cycles of feedback loops, giving constituents multiple opportunities to provide input and, in response, adjust the plan, helping them feel ownership in the plan. The benefits of this planning style are increased constituency commitment, community building (both internal and external), and a high-quality plan that considers broader perspectives. The disadvantage of this planning style is that it can take more time to go through the environmental scanning phase, and it can appear to be disorganized while going through the consultation process (Ponder, 2009).

MODELS, GUIDES, AND ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

As strategic planning evolved, higher education saw increased customization of the process. Each planning process was designed to meet the very specific needs of the college or university (Lerner, 1999). There is a great breadth to the number and types of models utilized for strategic planning. There is no single acceptable model. There is a set of planning elements that have been used repeatedly throughout the history of strategic planning in higher

education, with new elements added as planning evolved. The models and elements discussed

in this section are significant to the evolution of planning and are most relevant to the product

of this dissertation. Additionally, they are representative of the breadth of literature available

on the subject.

Doyle and Lynch (1979) identified five parts of strategic planning: mission, background

analysis (mostly internal), objectives for the planning period, definition of strategies, and the

assessment of the organizational structure and information systems needed to implement the

plan. They focused on the selection of strategies that support the achievement of an

institution's objectives. They expressed the importance of prioritizing resources, new course

planning, and performance appraisals, which would happen as part of the strategic planning

process. Incorporating these pieces directly into the strategic plan may overcomplicate planning

at the branch campus level, but these are vital pieces of strategy work that can take place in

parallel to plan implementation and execution. Peterson (1980) identified an additional

element of planning, with environmental assessment (or environmental scanning), which

extended plan development outside the institution. By looking beyond the college or university,

leaders were able to identify potential changes or trends which may impact the trajectory of

the institution. Including it in the planning process helped ensure relevancy in the market

throughout the duration of the plan.

Cope (1981) identified similar components to planning, but he incorporated an

additional step of "integration of environment and institution." This step focused on

institutional effectiveness, which was of great importance during the period, and also appeared

to be more future-oriented than other planning models of the past. During this step, leaders

identified the elements in need of development to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the institution.

Kotler and Murphy (1981) developed a strategic planning model that was systematic and future-oriented. They incorporated several new elements into the process: resource analysis, organization design, and systems design. Resource analysis, which happens concurrently with the analysis of the environment and prior to goal formulation, is a process that helps leaders identify strengths and weaknesses. Through a resource audit, leaders can assess the people, money, and facilities available to them, so formulated goals can align with organizational strengths, and those where resources are weak can be avoided. Similarly, during the organization design part of the process, which comes after goal and strategy formulation, leaders can identify if changes to the organizational structure are necessary to support strategy implementation. The final step of the model is "systems design," where leaders must assess whether the systems in place can support goal achievement. The three systems identified are marketing information system, marketing planning system, and marketing control system. The marketing control system is utilized during implementation to ensure ongoing results are helping the organization achieve its goals. This model's focus on resources and the management of such is notable since plans cannot be implemented if they do not have the resources needed to do so. While these concepts are not as developed as more modern iterations, their model laid a foundation for the incorporation of resource planning in the strategic planning process.

Keller (1983) introduced a linear model for strategic planning that included additional components of the planning process: stakeholder (now more commonly referred to as

constituent or supporter) identification and prioritization, as well as evaluative feedback loops.

His model was more action-oriented than those used in the past, spending more time focusing

on decisions and less on analysis and forecasting. Prior to this, most institutions used a budget-

driven, incremental process (Hinton, 2022).

Lerner (1999) introduced additional strategies for analysis during the environmental

scanning stage. Like previous models, the internal and external analysis still took place, but

Lerner suggested the use of Porter's Five Forces as an alternative to the SWOT. Porter's Five

Forces could be used by leadership to assess the threat of competition in the realm of higher

education through the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of buyers (students), the

threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of suppliers (faculty), and rivalry among existing

competitors (Porter, 1979). Lerner (1999) also suggested gap analysis as a tool to determine

what the institution needs to do to close the gap between the current situation and the vision

of leadership.

Allison and Kaye (2005) presented a strategic planning guide and workbook for

nonprofit organizations. This guide was unique in that it was very straightforward and provided

multiple case studies and templates to assist leaders in developing their plans.

Ponder (2009) introduced strategies to engage the entire campus community through a

"consultative listening process" at her branch campus, the University of North Carolina,

Asheville. She led several dozen discussion sessions to ensure that everyone in the campus

community had an opportunity to be engaged in the process. She also incorporated an

authentic environmental scan through SWOT analysis and encouraged creativity by asking focus

groups what they would do if they had a billion dollars. This allowed them to think beyond their

current boundaries and remove fiscal constraints that could hinder idea formulation. She incorporated several cycles of feedback loops to ensure the campus community could provide input into the plan at several points in the process. In addition, she communicated regular updates in different modalities: campus meetings, briefings, the college website, and other college publications. Like others at this time, she strived to give ownership of the plan to the campus community to increase their commitment to implementation.

Bryson's (2018) guide for strategic planning at public and nonprofit organizations included "the strategy change cycle," which included a 10-step planning, implementation, and assessment process. This process is all-encompassing and incredibly thorough, bringing planners through the entire lifecycle of planning, leading into the next planning cycle. The workbook that supported Bryson's guide (Bryson & Alston, 2011) included many helpful worksheets and templates to support the planning process. Many of the components overlap the elements presented in other strategic planning guides and models.

The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) published a toolkit to assist leaders in engaging constituents (2019a). In the toolkit, SCUP presented multiple engagement methods to collect constituent input into the planning process. The toolkit contained a "stakeholder analysis worksheet," which can help leaders determine which constituents should play a role in campus planning.

Cascade (n.d.) published a strategic planning template in Excel format to accompany their strategic planning guide. This template serves as a tool for converting the findings from the environmental scan into focus areas, and later goals and actions (which they reference as objectives and projects). It serves as a tool to help users identify the major themes for their

planning process and provides questions that leaders need to answer to hone in on the goals

that are important to the organization. While this tool is not specifically targeted to institutions

of higher education, it could be transferable to this group.

The existing strategic planning models used in higher education are generally complex

and mostly designed for a specific institution. Many lack clarity regarding the implementation

process. Williams (2021) presented a strategic planning model that is simple and streamlined.

The B-VAR model consists of brainstorming, visioning, action, and results stages, with various

steps in each phase. The most robust phase of the model is "results," which places a large

emphasis on communication and launch. This model differs from other modern plans in that it

appears to be less collaborative, and many decisions are made at the leadership and committee

level, without significant input from college constituents at large. While the presented model

appears to be simple, the planning process is actually more complicated. The lack of

collaboration and input does streamline the process, but the end result is not likely

representative of the college community. This model is not appropriate for use at the branch

campus level.

Hinton (2022) published a guide to strategic planning that was specific to higher

education, an updated version of her guide published a decade earlier (Hinton, 2012). The

guide serves as a relevant model for higher education leaders to implement strategic planning

on their campuses.

CONCLUSION

Strategic planning in higher education has seen great development and evolution over

the past decade. As planning developed into a process that was less top-down and more

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collaborative, it became better aligned with the ideal process for a branch campus. No single

model or guide contains all the pieces necessary to assist a novice branch campus leader in the

development of their strategic plan. However, the models and elements that already exist are a

solid foundation for the product that will be presented in Chapter Four and the guides that will

be presented in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: APPROACH AND DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the methodology used in the design of the product presented in Chapter Four of this dissertation. It outlines the guiding characteristics, the objective, the guide limitations, the format, and the structure of the guide.

GUIDING CHARACTERISTICS

To be effective, while also remaining true to the institutional mission, a college's strategic planning process should be market-focused, inclusive, flexible, data-informed, intentional, and actionable. The guide reflects each of those characteristics.

MARKET-FOCUSED

A plan that is focused on the changing marketplace will help ensure a college can maintain relevancy in turbulent times. Mintzberg and Peters believed that one should listen to the market when developing a plan (Dooris, 2002). During the planning process, leadership should examine their position in the overall system to keep their institution in alignment with an ever-changing environment. An entrepreneurial plan can examine competition and ensure differentiation in the marketplace, playing a more active role in the destiny of the institution. (Keller, 1983).

INTENTIONAL

Strategy is more than just an organic evolution of thoughts and ideas. As noted by Mintzberg and Quinn, strategic planning needs to be established in advance of implementation.

The plan helps guide the activity toward goal achievement, and it is developed both consciously and purposefully (1996). The ability to formulate goals and intentionally proceed toward them is core to strategic planning (Dooris et al., 2004).

While strategic planning needs to be intentional and focused, that does not mean the plan is set in stone, never to be changed again until the next planning cycle. Both external and internal environments are forever changing, directly impacting the position of the institution in the marketplace. Leaders need to embark on the strategic planning process with flexibility, knowing that the plan must be dynamic to respond to changes in the environment (Mintzberg, 1994). Flexibility and action realignment need to be incorporated into the planning cycle to ensure that the plan is relevant throughout its entire lifecycle, not stagnating at the end of its timeline.

INCLUSIVE

Kotler and Murphy felt that planning should be completed at every level of the institution and should be a democratic process. When comparing strategic planning in higher education to planning in the business sector, leaders in higher education tend to make the process much more inclusive, bringing staff and faculty into the planning and implementation process (1981). The collegiality of the process encourages partnership between administration and faculty, which is crucial to ensuring all constituency groups are considered and heard (Sibley, 1986). Branch campus leaders must also work collaboratively with colleagues on the main campus to ensure that they understand how each entity supports the other and leads to their success (Shaw & Bornhoft, 2011). It is this collaboration that is core to strategic planning

at the community college. Including both internal and external constituencies, like employers, other nonprofit agencies, partner universities, and local government officials, in the planning process ensures that the plan captures the needs of learners in the local community.

DATA-INFORMED

While effective strategic planning at the college should be people-oriented, it also needs to incorporate data. Information systems need to be utilized in the planning process to define and establish needs and measure improvement (Petrides, 2003). Decisions should not solely be based on hard data, but they also cannot solely be based on intuition. There needs to be a balance in the process.

APPLICATION OF GUIDING CHARACTERISTICS

Each of the characteristics reviewed above has been applied to the product in the following ways.

Table 1: Application of Guiding Characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC	GUIDE APPLICATION
Market-Focused	Hard Data Collection, Community Roundtable
Intentional	Gaining Support, Pre-Planning
Flexible	Assessment and Plan Tracking
Inclusive	Environmental Scan, Constituent Identification
Data-Informed	Hard Data Collection and Analysis, Environmental Scan

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE PRODUCT

STRATEGIC PLANNING MODELS AND ELEMENTS

The Review of Literature outlined various strategic planning models and elements used in them. Several of those pieces of literature contributed to the development of the planning guide. The following chart identifies where those works were applied in the product:

Table 2: Resources Foundational to Guide Development

PHASE	SECTION	WORKS CONTRIBUTING TO DEVELOPMENT
Phase 1	Feasibility Analysis Quiz	Bryson and Alston, 2011
Phase 1	Strategic Plan Benefits	Mintzberg, 1994 Ponder, 2009
Phase 2	Developing a Plan Timeframe	Hinton, 2022
Phase 2	Developing a Comprehensive Timeline	Allison and Kaye, 2005 Hinton, 2022
Phase 2	Constituent Identification	Bryson, 2018 Bryson and Alston, 2011 Casolara et al., 1999 The Society for College and University Planning, 2019a
Phase 2	Planning Committee Membership and Charge	Hinton, 2022
Phase 2	Hard Data Collection	Allison and Kaye, 2005
Phase 3	Mission and Vision Development	Allison and Kaye, 2005
Phase 3	Environmental Scan & Discussion Guides	Anderson, 2013 Casolara et al., 1999 Hinton, 2022 Ponder, 2009
Phase 3	Strategic Plan and Action Plan	Hinton, 2022
Phase 4	Implementation	Allison and Kaye, 2005 Hinton, 2022

STRATEGIC PLANNING GUIDES

Four higher education/nonprofit strategic planning guides were reviewed as part of researching the product. These guides are based in literature and contribute to the development of the product. There is a significant amount of overlap in content among each of the guides, as the flow of the strategic planning process is relatively consistent. Each has the target audience of a dedicated planner, likely with planning as a full-time role and significant resources. Each guide, however, has different elements.

Allison and Kaye's guide (2005) provided an outline of data that should be collected to inform the planning process, along with potential sources of this data. This hard data included items such as trend data, funder information, demographic changes, regulatory changes,

financial trends, client data, client satisfaction, quality indicators, and opportunities for future

programs. They also provided helpful guidance for an institution developing the mission and

vision statements. While other writers have discussed mission and vision, Allison and Kaye

provided a narrative that is specifically helpful for nonprofits and institutions of higher

education. They presented examples of mission and vision statements developed by other

organizations as a guideline for the user's own mission and vision development.

Bryson's (2018) guide and its accompanying Strategy Change Cycle were orderly,

deliberative, and participative. It can seem overwhelming at first glance since there are so many

components, but each individual step is relatively straightforward. A unique characteristic of

this model is the care taken in the development of the strategic planning process. This ensures

that all the appropriate supporters are included in the process and that those who are involved

in the process are aligned and working toward the same goal. Likewise, Bryson presents the

development of an implementation process that is incredibly thorough, ensuring that the

planning group sets the process up for action and change. This aligns with Bryson's perspective

that the most important activities are strategic thinking, acting, and learning, not necessarily

the planning piece itself.

Bryson and Alston's (2011) accompanying workbook provided many worksheets that

could help a leader document their strategic planning process. One unique element is their

checklist of reasons why an organization should not engage in the strategic planning process.

Those reasons include: lack of support, lack of resources needed to implement change, or the

organization being in flux.

Hinton's (2022) guide, which is specific to institutions of higher education, incorporates many of the elements discussed earlier in this chapter. She introduces additional details about the process of identifying members of the planning committee and also provides a sample charge letter to assist leaders in establishing this part of the planning process.

An evaluation of each guide was conducted on the following parameters: the intended audience, ease of use, and the features of the guide. A summary of those findings can be seen in the table below.

Table 3: Evaluation of Strategic Planning Guides

GUIDE TITLE AND CITATION	INTENDED AUDIENCE	EASE OF USE	FORMAT AND FEATURES	OBSERVATIONS
Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations: A practical guide and workbook (Allison & Kaye, 2005)	The board and staff of small to medium size nonprofit institutions.	Very long and very thorough (460 pages)- likely overcomplicated for the non-expert.	Workbook format with worksheets and templates Case Studies	Worksheets and templates are helpful for non-experts. Users can pick and choose which components to utilize.
Creating your strategic plan (Bryson & Alston, 2011)	Leaders, managers, planners, employees, and other constituents of public and nonprofit organizations.	Complex and long, but broken down into manageable steps. Long (271 pages).	Structured into ten steps. Workbook format	The workbook allows users to track progress which is helpful in making the process more tangible.

GUIDE TITLE AND CITATION	INTENDED AUDIENCE	EASE OF USE	FORMAT AND FEATURES	OBSERVATIONS
Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement (Bryson, 2018) *Companion to workbook above	Government officials, managers, policymakers, and planners in governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Academics and students of strategic planning and management.	Incredibly complicated. At 507 pages, it would require many resources to review and implement.	10-step strategy change process. Orderly, deliberative, and participative. Case studies and diagrams.	The size of the document could be overwhelming to someone unfamiliar with planning.
A practical guide to strategic planning in higher education (Hinton, 2022)	Managers and planners in institutions of higher education.	Straightforward and easily understood. Medium length (100 pages).	Worksheets, examples/case studies, visual graphs/charts.	A solid guide to help a leader navigate the strategic planning process. The steps are thorough but straightforward. Contains information not relevant to branch campus planning.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PRODUCT

The product presented in Chapter Four of this dissertation is customized specifically for

planning at the branch campus. The intended audience for this guide is community college

branch campus leaders. Branch campus leaders have distinct needs for a toolkit to guide the

development of a branch campus strategic plan. Most leaders are not experts in strategic

planning, and it is one of many responsibilities they hold. They are balancing many priorities

and do not have significant resources of time or people to go through the planning process

(gillie gossom & Pelton, 2011). Branch campus leaders would benefit from a planning guide that

has the following characteristics:

- It is shorter than a traditional strategic planning guide.

- It requires fewer resources to implement.

- The process is streamlined (as much as a planning process can be)

- It requires little prior knowledge of the strategic planning process

- It provides a thorough toolkit in the form of timelines, templates, meeting outlines, and scripts.

Previously published guides have some of these elements, and they can serve as a

framework for this product, but no single guide meets all of the needs of a community college

branch campus leader. This dissertation presents a product that meets the specific needs of a

community college branch campus leader, which no other guide has previously achieved.

GUIDE LIMITATIONS

The guide specifically addresses strategic planning at community college branch

campuses. Not all branch campuses are the same, so adjustments may need to be made based

on the resources available for planning and the structure of the organization.

This guide does not address academic assessment, which is usually managed

collegewide, not at the branch campus. While academic assessment is incredibly important, it is

outside the scope of this product.

CHOICE OF FORMAT

The guide will be published in PDF format with accompanying fillable planning spreadsheets. Templates and worksheets will be available in downloadable and editable files, so they are easily accessible and customizable for the intended user.

GUIDE STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS

The plan is broken down into four sections: Foreword, Introduction, The Strategic Planning Process, and References.

The most significant section of the product is the Strategic Planning Process, which contains a narrative to lead the user through the strategic planning process. This section consists of five phases: Gaining Support, Pre-Planning, Plan Development, Implementation, and Closeout. Each section has accompanying worksheets and templates to assist the user in leading the strategic planning process; they can be found within the text of the guide and are specifically noted in the table of contents for ease of location. The objectives, components, and resources for each phase of the plan are presented below.

Table 4: Guide Structure Overview

PHASE	OBJECTIVES	COMPONENTS	RESOURCES
1: Gaining Support	To help the user gain appropriate resources and support to embark on the strategic planning process. To articulate strategic planning benefits to college leadership.	Recommendations on how to begin the planning process and ensure institutional support for the plan.	Feasibility Analysis Quiz

PHASE	OBJECTIVES	COMPONENTS	RESOURCES
2: Pre-Planning	To lay the foundation for future planning by creating a framework for the plan through a comprehensive timeline. To identify constituents and determine their role in the planning process. To gather data that will help guide future planning.	Establish Planning Leadership Develop a Plan Timeframe Develop a Comprehensive Timeline Constituent Identification Planning Committee Membership and Charge Hard Data Collection	Planning Timeline Spreadsheet Constituent Tracker Spreadsheet Charge to Planning Committee Guide
3: Plan Development	To guide the user through the development of the Mission and Vision for the campus, the Strategic Plan, and the Action Plan.	Mission and Vision Development Environmental Scan Establish Focus Areas Focus Area Task Forces Determine Goals and Actions Write the Strategic Plan and Action Plan	Mission and Vision Development Worksheet Discussion Guides for the Environmental Scan Template to Track Goals and Actions Strategic Plan Template Action Plan Template
4: Implementation	To ensure the plan continues to be active through its entire lifecycle and that goals are met.	Recommendations on how and when to complete plan assessment and tracking.	Plan Tracking Template
5: Closeout	To provide the user with information on how to complete the plan at the end of its lifecycle and appropriately document goal achievement.	Recommendations on the information are to be reported at the end of the planning cycle.	None

CONCLUSION

This product dissertation was influenced by the various guides and models discussed in the Review of Literature. This section reviewed the components of the product, connected them to previously completed literature, and identified the ways this dissertation presents a product that meets a specific need that has not been filled by any other pieces of literature.

CHAPTER FOUR: A STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE BRANCH CAMPUS LEADERS

A Strategic Planning Toolkit for Community College Branch Campus Leaders

Allison M Fitzpatrick

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Foreword

To my fellow branch campus leader:

You likely found this guide because you have considered writing a strategic plan for your community college branch campus, or someone told you that you needed one. You may be an experienced planner (kudos to you!), or you may have never led a planning process before. You might need help figuring out where to start or how to garner the resources you need to create a pathway for your campus.

I was in your shoes not too many years ago, a new campus leader in charge of the strategic planning process for a rural branch campus, and in the middle of the COVID pandemic, no less. It was definitely a challenge, but I learned a lot along the way. Most importantly, I learned about the power of a team. Without the collegiality and collaboration of our campus community, the plan would never have gotten off the ground. I am forever grateful for this experience, learning how to lead in a time of crisis and uncertainty, but also seeing the power of the great people who come together when the going gets tough— all in the best interest of the campus, the community, and the students served.

This guide is an amalgamation of the lessons I learned during this process and my extensive research on strategies for effective strategic planning, customizing it for the unique needs of community college branch campuses. I hope this guide helps you move through a challenging process with a toolbox (a Swiss army knife, perhaps) to help you confidently lead a planning process that brings your college community together to support the future of your branch, its local community, and its future students. I wish you much success in your planning endeavors!

Allison M. Fitzpatrick

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Introduction

Strategic planning has many benefits for institutions of higher education, specifically branch campuses. A plan helps the campus community move in one direction toward the same set of goals. Plans can also help communicate to the community at large, as well as supporters like donors and public officials, about the projects and accomplishments the college leadership is working towards as they seek to gain support. Yet many institutional leaders, particularly those at branch campuses, are not strategic in nature. They address operations with a short-term focus, caught up in day-to-day activities. The strategic planning process can help guide leaders into a more proactive, longer-term, systematic focus on change.

Branch campus leaders are not specialists in strategic planning and constantly juggle multiple priorities. They often deal with budget challenges and may not have the level of personnel that it normally would take to go through a typical strategic planning process. This product dissertation provides a guide for branch campus leaders that will assist them in leading a strategic planning process, both effectively and efficiently, with limited resources. It is practitioner-focused and most applicable at community college branch campuses. The product could, however, be adapted for use at universities and/or locations that are not as autonomous as a branch campus, such as satellites or additional locations.

Guide Differentiators

The strategic planning guides I reviewed ranged from 100 all the way to 500 pages long (!!!). Furthermore, some of them are so complicated that you need to be a planning expert with extensive resources to implement them. As we know, branch campus leaders are stretched for resources, and those guides would likely sit on the shelf collecting dust. My goal is to present a simple, yet effective, strategic planning guide that will help you make your branch campus strategic plan a reality in as little as a year's time. The guide provides some narrative but makes it digestible so even the busiest branch campus leader can take the time to at least explore the process. Going through the actual planning process will take much more time and commitment, but the methods and tools presented in this guide should help ease some of the burden. No doubt about it, the strategic planning process is a heavy lift, but this guide will give you tools to get through the process more efficiently.

You are probably also wondering how the strategic planning process differs for a branch campus plan compared to a collegewide plan. While the branch campus plan itself is more tactical than a collegewide plan, the process is necessarily similar to that of an entire

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institution. Since the branch campus, by definition, operates independently, it needs to cater to a specific population of students and a distinct local community. Depending on the service area, the branch may even experience different economic conditions and programmatic needs. This means that the plan needs to be fully customized to the needs of the branch campus community, requiring a full strategic planning process to be carried out. While it will not specifically be addressed in this guide, it is important that the branch campus plan be developed in concert with the collegewide plan to ensure consistency and avoid conflicting priorities. That is why it is so important to engage your institutional research and planning team in this process.

How is this guide different?

- It is inclusive of both the branch campus community (internal and external) and the collegewide community.
- It is more concise than a traditional strategic planning guide.
- It requires fewer resources to execute.
- The process is streamlined (as much as a planning process can be)
- It requires little prior knowledge of the strategic planning process.
- It provides a thorough toolkit in the form of timelines, templates, and discussion guides.

Guiding Characteristics for the Planning Process

Market-Focused	Intentional	Flexible	Inclusive	Data-Informed
You need to be aligned with the needs of your local employers, regional economic development needs, and student needs. Keeping the market in the front of mind while planning will help keep you in alignment with an ever-changing environment.	Strategy is more than just an organic evolution of thoughts and ideas. This plan helps guide the activity toward goal achievement, and it is developed both consciously and purposefully.	Strategic planning needs to be intentional, but it also needs to be flexible. The world we live in is constantly changing. The plan must be dynamic to respond to any changes in the environment so the plan is relevant through its entire life cycle.	Inclusivity is the key differentiator between business planning and higher education planning. Partnership between administration and faculty is crucial to a successful plan. Including external constituencies in the planning process ensures that the plan captures the needs of learners in the local community.	While effective strategic planning at the college should be people-oriented, it also needs to incorporate data. Decisions should not solely be based on hard data, but they also cannot solely be based on intuition. There needs to be a balance in the process.

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Phase 5: Closeout
- Document plan completion and goal attainment
- Identify improvements to planning process
- Prepare for the next planning cycle

Phase 1: Gaining Support
- Feasibility analysis
- Articulate need for the plan
- Garner leadership support

Phase 2: Pre-Planning
- Plan leadership
- Timeline & communication plan
- Constituent identification
- Charge planning committee
- Collection of hard data

Phase 4: Implementation
- Mid-year check-in
- End of year report
- Plan tracking- Reporting outcomes
- Adjustment of action plan as needed

Phase 3: Plan Development
- Mission/Vision
- Environmental Scan
- Focus area task forces
- Goals and actions
- Develop strategic plan and action plan

Phase 1: Gaining Support

During this phase of the process, you need to ensure you have the resources and institutional support you need to move forward with your branch campus strategic plan. Before beginning that process, however, you need to ensure that a strategic plan is the right tool for your specific campus. It may be helpful to go through the following checklist to ensure that this is the right time for you to engage in planning. You would hate to go through the entire planning process only to find out you do not have the support or resources you need to implement it.

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Is a strategic plan right for my campus? True or False

✓ I have the authority to initiate a strategic planning process for my branch campus.

✓ I have buy-in from the branch campus community. If not, I am confident I can build it.

✓ My campus serves a discrete audience separate from the main campus, either different employers or different students.

✓ Leadership at my campus (in the departments that need to be involved in plan implementation) is relatively stable.

✓ I have enough employees working at my campus to implement a plan.

If you answered TRUE for each of these statements, you are ready to move on!

If you cannot confidently answer "TRUE," you may want to consider a different type of plan. One option is a shorter-term tactical plan that piggybacks on the overall college plan. You can pick and choose which pieces of this planning guide would help guide the campus through the process.

Gaining collegewide support

Before any planning begins, you must ensure you have support from various parties across the college. The very first thing you need to do is gain the support of your immediate supervisor, as well as the cabinet member you ultimately report to (if applicable). You must ensure they will go to bat for you and advocate for you during this phase of the process. They can assist in gaining support from each of the other college cabinet members to ensure participation from their teams in the development and implementation of the plan.

There are a few ways you can seek their support. I recommend a presentation at a regular cabinet meeting to discuss the importance of the planning process for your campus. If that's not possible, written communication may be sufficient for articulating your need.

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I recommend preparing a written document outlining the benefits that a formal strategic plan would have for your campus. This will help you with talking points when discussing the planning process with college constituents. The Strategic Plan Benefits outlined below will assist you in articulating your position.

Strategic Plan Benefits

- Ensures the branch fits into the overall mission and vision of the institution at large.

- Helps the campus community move in one direction toward the same set of goals.

- Communicates projects and accomplishments to constituents (like donors and public officials) as it seeks to gain their support.

- Encourages a proactive mindset with a longer-term, systematic focus on change.

- Identifies ways the campus can support the local community, which could result in new partnerships and cost savings/additional revenue.

Food for thought to help you articulate your specific need:

- How will a strategic plan help advance your campus?

- What are some of the challenges you have dealt with that need organization and collaboration to be addressed?

- What are some of the changes happening in your local community? Do you know how they will impact your campus?

Phase 2: Pre-Planning

Pre-Planning is a vital step in the process of laying a smooth foundation for plan development. During this stage, you will establish plan leadership, develop a timeline, analyze your campus support and resources, identify and invite your planning committee membership, and start gathering your hard data. You may be tempted to just jump right into the plan development process, but this step is important in making sure you have the information and people you need to make the planning process a successful one.

Establish Planning Leadership

The strategic planning process is usually overseen by the most senior leader of the branch campus (That's you!). Whether your title is dean, director, manager, vice president, or something else, you are responsible for the success of the campus, so you need to maintain accountability for developing the plan and carrying it through the entire planning cycle.

There are several reasons you should include a co-chair in the planning process. First, an extra set of hands to do the heavy lifting is always welcome when going through the planning process. Second, it is helpful to have another perspective as you make major decisions that impact your campus. I recommend including someone with a different skillset from yourself to serve in this capacity. You may consider a faculty member or someone from your institutional research team to fill this role.

Develop a Plan Timeframe

You need to identify the appropriate timeframe for your plan. Many institutional strategic plans span 5-10 years. For a branch campus, I recommend a much shorter span of time. 3-5 years is likely more appropriate for a community college branch campus, as the local environment could change at a more rapid pace. As you select your plan timeframe, ensure that you are coinciding with any institutional planning timeframes that are in effect, such as the budget cycle.

Develop a Comprehensive Timeline

Most strategic plans will take 12-18 months to develop before moving into the implementation phase. As a branch campus leader, you likely want to move through the process quickly. However, you need to be mindful of the academic and budget calendars when mapping out the planning process. You need to be sure your faculty will be accessible during planning, so avoid

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any large group sessions during the summer and other break periods. You will also need to identify necessary resources with sufficient time to influence the budgeting process for the next fiscal year. You should work with the college's financial manager to determine those timelines, so your planning can be built around that cycle. Different institutions have different budget cycles, so this is an incredibly important step in ensuring your plan will have the resources required for implementation.

SPREADSHEET: Planning Timeline

> *Complete the Planning Timeline tab on the Planning Spreadsheet to develop your comprehensive timeline.*
>
> The main steps in the planning cycle are already completed for you, but there are additional pieces you will want to add to this plan. Identify the steps in the process that are integral for your campus and plan for the meetings you will want to host with your Planning Committee. You will also need to include a Communication Plan with check-in points with the campus community- emails, campus presentations, listening sessions, and any of the other communication methods that work best for your campus.

Constituent Identification

The traditional term for this tool is "Stakeholder Analysis." The term stakeholder is now more commonly referred to as constituent or supporter.

A constituent is anyone who can impact the branch campus or will be impacted by the branch campus. The Constituent Tracker is used to determine which internal and external supporters need to be involved in the planning process. In your first pass, you will identify major players, as well as the members of your planning committee. Later in the process, your planning committee members should provide input to ensure you have a comprehensive list of all internal and external constituents who need to be involved in the planning and implementation of the strategic plan. You will likely see that your external constituents are more local than you might find if you did this same exercise for your parent campus. The involvement of external constituents in the process will not only help you gather input from them, but it may also help foster partnership and ensure ongoing support from the community.

Definition of Planning Groups

Branch Campus Leader- The senior-most employee at the branch campus with responsibility for oversight of the campus. They could be a dean, director, manager, vice president, or something else.

Branch Campus Leadership- The employees who serve in supervisory roles at the branch campus and have oversight of their individual areas. This could include directors, associate directors, deans, or something else.

College Leadership- The senior-level employees who oversee the entire college and its various locations. This could be Cabinet or a more senior-level leadership team.

Planning Leadership- The co-chairs who oversee the planning process. This is likely the campus leader and one other individual.

Planning Committee- The 10-12 individuals from across the institution who assist planning leadership in the strategic planning process and assist with writing the strategic plan and the action plan. Each member will likely also oversee a Focus Area Task Force.

Focus Area Task Forces- The groups that have specific responsibility for forming goals and actions for each of the focus areas for the plan.

SPREADSHEET: Constituent Tracker

Complete the Constituent Tracker in the Planning Spreadsheet Excel file as you progress through the following identification steps.

Desired Outcome

- An inclusive list of internal and external constituents

- Their current level of branch campus involvement

- Their level of potential impact on the branch campus

- Their role in Planning and Implementation

Participants: Planning Leadership, Planning Committee

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Step 1: Identify Constituents

Who are the internal and external constituents who have, or could have, a great impact on your campus?

Who are the decision-makers who need to be part of the formation of a plan? For example, if you anticipate adding programs to the campus, the appropriate academic affairs leaders need to be involved.

External constituents to consider: Donors, funding agencies, local governmental agencies, business leaders, alumni, other colleges and universities, law enforcement agencies, school district representatives, and social service agencies.

Internal constituents to consider: Trustees, students, and alumni. Employees representing the following areas of the college: institutional planning and research, grants, facilities, finance, continuing education (non-credit), student affairs (enrollment and retention), academic affairs, and faculty in various roles (teaching, library, advising, counseling, etc.).

Step 2: Indicate the Current Level of Branch Campus Involvement

Level 1-5 from Poor to Excellent

Step 3: Indicate the Level of Potential Impact on the Branch Campus

Levels 1-5 from Very Low to Very High

Step 4: Indicate Possible Role in the Planning Process

Depending on the individual's constituency group, level of involvement, and level of impact, they will play different roles in the planning and implementation process. Your list will vary, but some roles may include the following:

- Planning leadership

- Planning committee

- Community roundtable (external)

- General input (internal or external)

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- Student roundtable

- Focus area task force

Once the spreadsheet is complete, you can use it to guide the selection of members for various committees and planning sessions you will conduct later in Phases 2 and 3.

Name	Internal or External	Affiliation/Company	Constituency Group	Level of Branch Campus Involvement (1-5)	Level of Potential Impact on Branch Campus (1-5)	Planning Role	Notes
Jo Smith	External	Galaxy Hospital	Employer	3 – Good	2 – Low	Community Roundtable	Planning expansion- may have new staffing/programmatic needs.
Tracy Miller	Internal	School of Business	Faculty	4 – Very good	High	Planning Leadership	Would make a great co-chair

COMPLETE IN PLANNING SPREADSHEET

Planning Committee Membership and Charge

The Constituent Identification you conducted in the previous step should help you determine the membership of your planning committee. Planning committees typically consist of 10-12 members from a broad cross-section of the organization. The structure of your college and your campus will influence the size of this group, as you will want to ensure that the right college decision-makers are involved in the process. You will want a mix of branch campus and collegewide representation.

Considerations for Committee Membership

- Institutional Planning (sometimes called Institutional Research or Institutional Effectiveness)

- Grants Office

- Facilities

- Finance

- Continuing Education (non-credit)

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- o Student Affairs: Enrollment Management and Retention

- o Academic Affairs, possibly academic deans or department chairs

- o Faculty in various roles: teaching, library, advising, counseling, etc.

- o Students

*Ensure that you have appropriate representation from all employee groups: clerical, staff, administration, etc.

GUIDE: Charge the Planning Committee

An official charge letter should be sent to each member invited to join the planning committee, to outline the expectations of the commitment and to also offer thanks for their commitment to the planning effort. The letter should be sent from planning leadership and could include the following:

- Committee membership
  - o Planning leadership
  - o The makeup of the committee by constituency
  - o Committee member names (if available)
- An overview of the planning process and timeline
  - o Timeline of the five planning phases
  - o More detailed timing for Phase 3: Plan Development
  - o Dates for any retreats or roundtables committee members will attend.
- Term length
  - o Will they stay on for implementation or just planning?
- Scope of responsibility
  - o Will they be leading a focus area task force?
  - o Will they be writing a portion of the plan?
  - o What meetings will they need to attend/facilitate?
  - o How many hours per week should they anticipate spending on the planning process?
- Expectations for participation

Hard Data Collection

It is beneficial to partner with experts in data collection for this part of the process. Your institutional research office will be key to getting instrumental data to guide decision-making during your plan development. In addition to internal assistance, you should engage your local economic development and/or regional planning officials to assist with gathering external data.

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Data to consider collecting to help guide your plan:

- Internal
  - Branch Campus Enrollments- historical, by major, zip code, feeder high school, etc.
  - Student demographics and their trends.
  - The organizational chart of the campus.
  - Five-year budget history.
- External
  - Population trends and forecasts
  - Local economic data and workforce forecasting
  - High-needs occupations and hard-to-fill jobs (short-term)
  - New industries or companies entering the region (long-term)
  - Upcoming grant opportunities

Phase 3: Plan Development

During this phase, you will work with your campus community and planning committee to develop the strategic plan and the action plan. This part of the process should be as inclusive as possible, bringing many voices into the conversation. While it would be nice for this process to be linear, it will likely look a little messy from the outside as you attempt to gather information from the campus community, develop the plan, and give folks opportunities to weigh in throughout the process.

Mission and Vision Development

If your branch campus already has its own mission and vision, you can skip this step and come back to it after the Environmental Scan is completed.

> **Mission:** the WHY of your campus. Why are you in the community where you are located? Who do you serve? What is your purpose?
>
> **Vision:** What direction should your campus go in? Where do you need to be ten years from

The campus mission and vision capture the current and envisioned states of the campus and set the tone for the planning process. This ensures consistent threads throughout your plan, tying it back to the mission of the campus. The mission and vision do not need to be overly complicated.

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Objective: Develop a branch campus mission statement and vision statement to help guide the strategic planning process.

Participants: Planning Committee

Step 1: Identify the Mission and Vision Statements for the parent campus of your institution.

Institutional Mission Statement:

Institutional Vision Statement:

Step 2: Answer the following questions:

Mission

- What is the purpose of your branch campus?
- Why do you exist?
- Why are you located in your current community?
- Who do you serve?

Vision

- How do you envision the future of your campus? In 5 years… In 10 years…
- What are the opportunities for development that exist in your service area?

Step 3: Considering the answers above, along with your institution's mission and vision, finish the following statements:

Mission: The purpose of the _____ branch campus is to:

Vision: The _____ branch campus will:

*Note: depending on the current familiarity with the needs of the community, the vision statement may need to be readdressed with the entire campus community and/or after the goal-setting stage is completed.

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Environmental Scan

The most popular method of conducting an environmental scan is the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Roundtables should be conducted for both internal and external constituencies, where the planning process can be introduced, some background information on the campus can be presented, and the planning team can lead the environmental scan process.

The questions and format will change slightly depending on your audience. While specific individuals will be invited to the community and student roundtables, all branch campus employees should be engaged. This will require multiple roundtable sessions for the group, which will be time-consuming. However, it will help ensure that they are able to contribute to the process and have their voices heard. Ultimately, this will help during the implementation phase, when these same employees will need to work toward the identified goals and actions. Surveys are also a helpful tool to capture additional input from folks who are unable to participate in a focus group or who may be uncomfortable sharing in a group setting.

What is a SWOT Analysis?

The SWOT Analysis is a tool used by leaders to help the organization think about its strategic position and what actions need to happen to realize the vision. It serves as a framework for qualitative assessment in the strategic planning process, including discussion among various branch campus constituents.

Strengths- Internal factors that increase the competitive nature of the campus.

Weaknesses- Internal limitations that make the campus less competitive.

Opportunities- External factors that can improve the campus's competitive nature.

Threats- External factors that can hinder the campus's competitive nature.

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Discussion Guides

The following discussion guides provide you with a framework to assist you in leading each of the environmental scanning sessions. You should customize the questions based on the needs and culture of your campus. For the community roundtable, it is recommended that you select a cross-section of key individuals that hold the most influence on the campus, as well as local economic development groups. For the student roundtable, the branch campus student affairs team is a great resource to identify students who can fairly represent the needs of the student body. You want to hear from not only your most active and brightest students but also those who may be struggling or have overcome great challenges to be on campus. For employee constituents, you should give every individual an opportunity to provide input into the plan.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Community Roundtable

Objectives: Gather input from external constituents to guide the planning process, particularly around future programming and training needs.   Foster partnership. Gain ongoing support.

Participants: Planning Leadership, Planning Committee, previously identified External Constituents

Recommended Meeting Format:

- Two 90-120 minute roundtable sessions
- **Session 1:** Internal Strengths and Weaknesses
  - Campus scene setting- presented by planning leadership (data collected during Phase 2)
    - Campus Mission
    - Snapshot- enrollment, budget, staffing, etc.
    - Accomplishments over the past 2-3 years.
    - Impact on the local community
  - Small Group Discussion
    - Strengths Identification
      - What do you see as the strengths of the _____ Campus?
      - How does the _____ Campus add value to the _____ community?
    - Weaknesses Identification
      - What could we do differently to help our students persist and achieve their goals?
      - Where can we improve?
  - Small Group Report Out
  - Wrap-Up & Next Steps
- Session 2: External Opportunities and Threats
  - Community scene setting- presented by planning leadership or local economic development group (Data collected during Phase 2)
    - Population: trends and forecasts
    - Local economic data and workforce forecasting
    - High-needs occupations and hard-to-fill jobs (short-term)

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- New industries or companies entering the region (long-term)
- Upcoming grant opportunities
  - Small Group Discussion
    - Opportunities Identification
      - How is the local community projected to change in the next five years? Ten years?
      - What are the pressing educational or training needs in the region?
      - What can _____ do to help you as a partner?
      - What challenges do we face in our local community that we can help address on our campus?
    - Threats Identification
      - What external threats could hinder us from achieving our mission?
  - Small Group Report Out
  - Wrap-Up & Next Steps

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Student Roundtable

Objective: Gather input from students to guide the planning process.

Participants: Planning Leadership, Planning Committee, previously identified Student Constituents

Recommended Meeting Format:

- 60-90 minute roundtable sessions, 6-8 participants per session
- Campus & Community scene setting- presented by planning leadership (data collected during Phase 2)
- *This should be a broader overview than the employee or community scene setting. Think about the specific interests of the students.*
  - Internal-
    - Campus Mission and Vision
    - Snapshot- enrollment, budget, staffing, etc.
    - Accomplishments over the past 2-3 years.
    - Impact on the local community
    - An organizational chart of the campus.
  - External
    - Population: trends and forecasts
    - Local economic data and workforce forecasting
    - High-needs occupations and hard-to-fill jobs (short-term)
    - New industries or companies entering the region (long-term)
    - Upcoming grant opportunities
- Group Discussion
  - Strengths Identification
    - What does the _____ Campus do best?
    - What do you like best about the _____ Campus?
  - Weaknesses Identification
    - What could we do better to help you be successful?
    - Where can we improve?

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- o Opportunities Identification
  - ▪ What do you think the _____ Campus could do to attract new students to campus?
- o Threats Identification
  - ▪ Have you experienced any barriers outside the school setting that impacted your ability to succeed at the _____ Campus?
- Wrap-Up & Next Steps

DISCUSSION GUIDE: Employee Roundtable

Objective: Gather input from employee constituents to guide the planning process.   Foster ownership in the plan.

Participants: Planning Leadership, Planning Committee, all Branch Campus employees

Recommended Meeting Format:

- 60-90 minute roundtable sessions, 6-8 participants per session
- Campus & Community scene setting- presented by planning leadership (data collected during Phase 2)
  - o Internal-
    - ▪ Campus Mission and Vision
    - ▪ Snapshot- enrollment, budget, staffing, etc.
    - ▪ Accomplishments over the past 2-3 years.
    - ▪ Impact on the local community
    - ▪ An organizational chart of the campus.
  - o External
    - ▪ Population: trends and forecasts
    - ▪ Local economic data and workforce forecasting
    - ▪ High-needs occupations and hard-to-fill jobs (short-term)
    - ▪ New industries or companies entering the region (long-term)
    - ▪ Upcoming grant opportunities
- Group Discussion
  - o Strengths Identification
    - ▪ What does the _____ Campus do best?
    - ▪ What do you see as the strengths of the _____ Campus?
    - ▪ What do we do that no one else can do?
  - o Weaknesses Identification
    - ▪ What could we do better to help our students persist and achieve their goals?
    - ▪ Where can we improve?
  - o Opportunities Identification
    - ▪ What challenges do we face in our local community that we can address on our campus?
    - ▪ What populations have been underserved by our campus?
  - o Threats Identification
    - ▪ What external threats could hinder us from achieving our mission?
- Wrap-Up & Next Steps

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Establish Focus Areas with the Planning Committee

Once the Environmental Scan is complete, Planning Leadership should organize the collected data. They can engage the office overseeing institutional research to assist with thematic analysis of the data, which will help determine the overarching themes of the responses. The planning committee should be provided with this information, along with the hard data collected in Phase 2. At this point, the planning committee should meet for a half-day retreat to debrief and establish the focus areas for the plan. The focus areas will reflect the most relevant themes captured in the Environmental Scan, incorporating the hard data that was also collected. Usually, 3-5 Focus Areas are appropriate for a Branch Campus plan.

Focus Area Task Forces

If the campus is large enough to support it, assigning a task force to each of the focus groups can allow for a more inclusive process, giving more ownership to the campus community. Each Focus Area Task Force would be responsible for goal and action development. Members of the Planning Committee should chair each of the task forces, so they can report back to the group regularly.

When considering task force membership, it's wise to include representatives from various locations: the branch campus, main campus, and collegewide (possibly representing multiple locations). The advantage of this tactic is that broader representation around the table helps ensure goals and actions are aligned across the college. In addition, this helps to ensure stronger buy-in for plan implementation.

These groups typically work for 1-2 months on goal and action identification. Based on the makeup of the team, planning leadership may opt to make the committee active for the duration of the plan to carry out implementation as well.
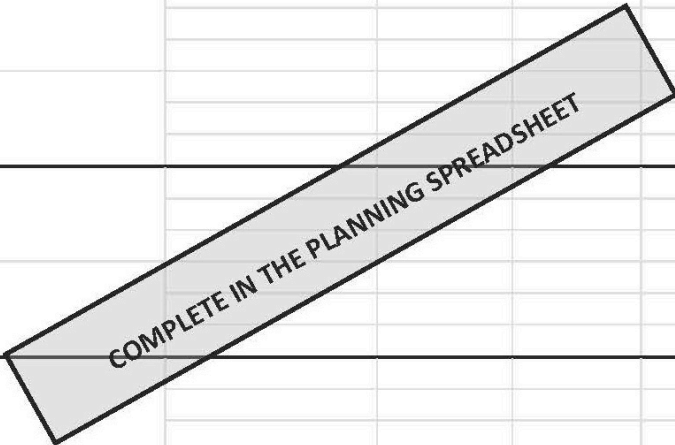
Determine Goals and Actions

Depending on the path chosen, either the Planning Committee or the Focus Area Task Forces will develop the goals and actions for the strategic plan. Goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Based) and should be guided by the data collected throughout the Pre-Planning and Environmental Scanning stages. Planning leadership should work closely with teams to ensure the goals align with the mission and vision of the campus. They should be ambitious but not unrealistic.

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Actions are the smaller steps used to work toward goal attainment. Actions are more digestible and can be completed in a shorter span of time. Actions should have specific start and end dates. When creating actions, the committee must identify any resources required for implementation. This will help drive the budget development process so that requested funds can be appropriately prioritized.

The Plan Tracking tab in the Planning Spreadsheet can be used to track the goals and actions developed by the Focus Area Task Forces and can be pasted directly into the Strategic Plan and Action Plan.

Focus Area	Goal	Action	Start Date	End Date	Resources Required
Focus Area One					
Focus Area Two					
Focus Area Three					
Focus Area Four					
Focus Area Five					

COMPLETE IN THE PLANNING SPREADSHEET

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Write the Strategic Plan & Action Plan

Both the Strategic Plan and the Action Plan are the written deliverables at the end of the strategic planning process. Each serves a different purpose, and both documents together paint the full picture for the campus community.

The Strategic Plan is a 30,000-foot view of the future of the campus over the timespan of the plan. It is appropriate to share with the campus community as well as external supporters such as potential donors, local politicians, and local employers. It helps them to see the vision and future of the campus. For the internal community, it is a succinct document that can help keep planning front of mind in a more digestible format. The Strategic Plan is not designed to be modified. An adjustment would likely only happen in the case of an unplanned environmental change, such as extreme budget fluctuations or drastic changes in enrollment.

The Action Plan, however, digs a bit deeper. It articulates the various actions that need to take place to successfully meet the goals set in the Strategic Plan. It is more tactical and is meant to serve as a road map to help the branch campus navigate its way through the implementation process. It addresses measurable outcomes (SMART goals) and timing benchmarks to keep the plan on track. The Action Plan is developed for the duration of the plan. However, the Planning Committee may find that they need to adjust the plan each year, depending on the progress made during the previous year.

	Strategic Plan	Action Plan
Audience	External and Internal	Internal Only
Purpose	Communicate the future of the campus to partners and supporters.	Communicate and track the actions required to meet the goals set in the Strategic Plan.
Permanency	Likely	Revised as needed
Components	• Mission • Vision • Focus Areas • Goals • Plan duration	• Actions • Deadlines • Accountable parties • Assessment schedule • Measurable goals

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Your Community College
Your Branch Campus
Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Introduction

- Scene-setting information for your campus
- Mission statement & Vision (in narrative form)
- Introduction to the plan's focus areas

Sample Text: Since 1994, Shoreline Community College's Springfield Branch Campus has provided quality higher education opportunities for residents of the Springfield County region. In the years following the opening of its current campus in 2014, the campus saw great success. However, shifting demographics resulted in a steady decline in enrollment. The surrounding community has again seen changes in population from a spike in new residents in 2020. There are great opportunities for the Springfield Campus to leverage its strengths and increase its reach to the residents of the region.

The Springfield Campus's mission is to "provide an accessible education to the Springfield County region that meets local employer needs." The vision of the campus is to grow the campus and provide improved opportunities to the Springfield region. This plan will lay the groundwork for the campus to make this vision a reality.

Five Focus areas lay the framework for the plan: Academic Programming, Partnerships, Enrollment, Human Resources, and Facilities. This Strategic Plan will be implemented over a five-year period, from September 2024 through June 2029.

Planning Overview

Planning Committee

- A list of participants who served on the planning committee(s)

- Their constituency group, title, and/or campus affiliation

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Name	Title

Planning Timeline (optional)

Dates	Phase	Activities

Mission

The Springfield Campus of Shoreline Community College will provide an accessible education to the Springfield County region that meets local employer needs.

Vision

The vision of the campus is to grow the campus and provide improved opportunities to the Springfield region.

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Focus Area	Goal	Start Date	End Date
Focus Area One			
Focus Area Two			
Focus Area Three			
Focus Area Four			
Focus Area Five			

COPY/PASTE FROM THE PLANNING SPREADSHEET

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Your Community College
Your Branch Campus
Action Plan 2024-2027

Mission

YOUR MISSION HERE

Vision

YOUR VISION HERE

Note: Use the Planning Spreadsheet in Excel as the master repository for tracking the calendar as well as goals and actions. Copy/Paste information into the Action Plan as needed.

Implementation & Assessment Calendar

*Copy/Paste from your own Planning Timeline within the Planning Spreadsheet

Start Date	End Date	Phase	Task	Participants
		Phase 4: Implementation	Mid-year check-in (each January)	Campus Leadership
		Phase 4: Implementation	End of year report (each June)	Campus Leadership
		Phase 4: Implementation	Plan tracking- reporting outcomes (each September)	Campus Leadership
		Phase 4: Implementation	Adjustment of actions as needed (annually)	Campus Leadership
		Phase 5: Closeout	Documentation of plan completion and goal attainment	Campus Leadership
		Phase 5: Closeout	Identification of improvements to planning process	Planning Committee/ Campus Leadership
		Phase 5: Closeout	Prepare for the next planning cycle	Campus Leadership

COPY/PASTE FROM THE PLANNING SPREADSHEET

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Goals and Actions

Focus Area	Goal	Action	Start Date	End Date	Resources Required
Focus Area One					
Focus Area Two					
Focus Area Three					
Focus Area Four					
Focus Area Five					

COPY/PASTE FROM THE PLANNING SPREADSHEET

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Phase 4: Implementation

Implementation of the strategic plan can often be the most challenging part of the process. Higher education institutions are often criticized for creating strategic plans that are dust collectors on a shelf. This planning process keeps implementation front of mind while going through the actual planning process. It is much harder to keep the plan at the forefront as time goes on. It is the job of the branch campus leader to provide checkpoints throughout the life of the plan to ensure that the work continues, and goals are met.
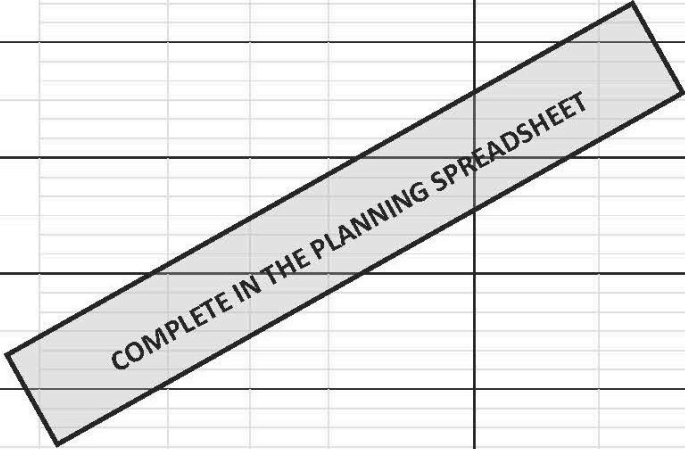
Assessment and Plan Tracking

The plan timeline and communication plans that were developed during Phase 2 continue to guide the timing of work and communication, even during the implementation phase. Assessment will happen at several points each year. The Mid-Year Status Report should be completed each January, with an End of Year Report completed at the end of the academic year and distributed to the entire college community to share plan progress. If needed, the Action Plan can be adjusted to account for any necessary changes to goals or timelines.

The Plan Tracking Template is a repository for regular documentation of plan progress. It should be used as an internal document to collect and track data. This information should be used to generate a more formal report in a format acceptable to your particular institution.

Focus Area	Goal	Action	Start Date	End Date	Resources Required	Year 1 Update	Year 2 Update	Year 3 Update	Final Report
Focus Area One									
Focus Area Two									
Focus Area Three									
Focus Area Four									
Focus Area Five									

COMPLETE IN THE PLANNING SPREADSHEET

Phase 5: Closeout

The Closeout phase provides an opportunity for the Planning Committee to reflect on the success of the plan. A final report on the plan will be distributed to the college community. It should report on the status of meeting the goals, as well as any additional achievements during the planning period. It should also note any recommended changes to the planning process that can be applied during the next round of planning.

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Appendix A: Planning Timeline

Start Date	End Date	Phase	Task	Participants	Communication	Supporting Documents	Notes
		Phase 1: Gaining Support	Feasibility Analysis	Self		Feasibility Analysis	
		Phase 1: Gaining Support	Articulate need for the plan	Self		Strategic Plan Benefits	
		Phase 1: Gaining Support	Garner leadership support	Cabinet			
		Phase 2: Pre-Planning	Establish plan leadership	Self & Supervisor			
		Phase 2: Pre-Planning	Timeline and communication plan	Plan Leadership		Planning Spreadsheet	
		Phase 2: Pre-Planning	Analysis of support and resources	Cabinet, Campus Leadership, Plan Leadership		Planning Spreadsheet	
		Phase 2: Pre-Planning	Charge planning committee	Plan Leadership		Charge to Planning Committee	
		Phase 2: Pre-Planning	Collection of hard data	Planning Committee, Campus Leadership, Institutional Research			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Identify mission and vision	Planning Committee			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Environmental scanning	Internal and External Supporters		Environmental Scanning Worksheet	
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Establish Focus Areas	Planning Committee			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Establish Focus Area Task Forces	Planning Committee			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Focus Area Task Forces Meet	Focus Area Task Forces			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Identify Goals and Actions	Focus Area Task Forces			
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Write Strategic Plan	Plan Leadership- with Planning Committee		Strategic Plan Template	
		Phase 3: Plan Development	Write Action Plan	Plan Leadership- with Planning Committee		Action Plan Template	
		Phase 4: Implementation	Mid-year check-in (each January)	Campus Leadership			
		Phase 4: Implementation	End of year report (each June)	Campus Leadership			
		Phase 4: Implementation	Plan tracking- reporting outcomes (each September)	Campus Leadership			
		Phase 4: Implementation	Adjustment of action plan as needed (annually)	Campus Leadership			
		Phase 5: Closeout	Documentation of plan completion and goal attainment	Campus Leadership			
		Phase 5: Closeout	Identification of improvements to planning process	Planning Committee/ Campus Leadership			
		Phase 5: Closeout	Prepare for the next planning cycle	Campus Leadership			

Appendix B: Constituent Tracker

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Name	Internal or External	Affiliation/Company	Constituency Group	Level of Branch Campus Involvement (1-5)	Level of Potential Impact on Branch Campus (1-5)	Planning Role	Notes
2	Jo Smith	External	Galaxy Hospital	Employer	3 – Good	2 – Low	Community Roundtable	Planning expansion- may have new staffing/programmatic needs.
3	Tracy Miller	Internal	School of Business	Faculty	4 – Very good	4 – High	Planning Leadership	Would make a great co-chair
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

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Appendix C: Plan Tracking

	Focus Area	Goal	Action	Start Date	End Date	Resources Required	Year 1 Update	Year 2 Update	Year 3 Update	Final Report
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
	Focus Area One									
	Focus Area Two									
	Focus Area Three									
	Focus Area Four									
	Focus Area Five									

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CHAPTER FIVE: REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five contains an overview of the author's reflection on the significance of the product as well as recommendations for future work to build on the product.

REFLECTION

THE FUTURE OF BRANCH CAMPUSES

The higher education landscape has changed dramatically since I initially embarked on the dissertation writing process. *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* drew the attention of many higher education leaders as Grawe relayed impending dramatic declines in enrollment over the coming decades (2018). From 2020-22, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on institutions of higher education across the country. Community colleges and their branch campuses experienced dramatic declines in enrollment, and the environment (both internal and external) became extremely unpredictable (Dembicki, 2022). Previously used forecasting models and enrollment predictions could be thrown out the window.

As community colleges examine their footprints in the midst of shifting demographics and the increasing shift of coursework to online modalities, strategic planning at the branch campus is increasingly important. It is crucial for branch campus leaders to complete an objective analysis of their value in the community and identify new opportunities and new revenue streams for the college. With new virtual options for course completion, is the branch campus still as important to the surrounding community as it was in the past? Is the cost of

maintaining a physical campus as valuable as it was in the past? These are challenging questions that branch campus leaders will need to ask as they face increasing pressure to justify their existence.

APPLICATION OF THE PRODUCT

As a former community college branch campus leader who led strategic planning processes at several different colleges and campuses, I can speak firsthand to the importance of the strategic planning process in forging a future path for one's campus. At one college, I had to resurrect a formerly tabled strategic planning process and bring the campus community back together to finish the planning process (during the COVID shutdown and while being brand new to my position and the college). Many, many times, I wished there was a simple guide to help me through the planning process, as I had to create the process as I went along. Mistakes were made along the way, and the process probably appeared disorganized to my campus community. However, after making several course corrections, we ended up with a final strategic plan and action plan that helped guide the future direction of the campus. It was a collective and inclusive effort that brought the campus community together during a particularly difficult time.

This product pulls together elements and models that I used in my own strategic planning in previous leadership roles while also improving on the processes that were used. I hope that other community college branch campus leaders can benefit from this work and that their jobs will be just a little bit easier with a toolkit to help them through an otherwise overwhelming and sometimes confusing process.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

ANALYSIS TOOLS

The product presented is a simplified planning process designed specifically for branch campus leaders who have little knowledge of strategic planning and are stretched for resources. The product can still be helpful for leaders who have gone through planning before, as the templates and worksheets can help organize an otherwise complicated process.

There is room for additional work in this area to address more specific needs for analysis, building on the work already completed in this product. The guide does not include a tool for program analysis, as academic affairs and programming are centered at the parent campus for many institutions. However, such a tool focused specifically on academic programming at branch campuses would be incredibly helpful and have broad appeal. In addition, it could incorporate a community needs analysis utilizing the hard data collected in Phase 2 of the strategic planning process.

PLAN ALIGNMENT

Additional research is needed in plan alignment across the institution, coordinating the branch campus strategic plan, the overall institutional plan, and various department plans (facilities, finance, academic affairs, student affairs, etc.). Plan alignment is particularly complicated at a branch, as nearly every area of the college has an interest in the branch and likely includes the branch in its own department plan. This is potentially troublesome, as the branch, institutions, and departments could end up with conflicting goals if they are not working collaboratively through the plan development process. The Society for College and

University Planning (2019b) has done some work in plan alignment through its integrated

planning model. However, they do not specifically address branch campuses.

CAMPUS AND INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Hinton (2022) asserts the importance of considering culture throughout the strategic

planning process at colleges and universities. Her work focuses on the institution at large and

does not specifically address the culture at branch campuses. Because of the distinct

populations, the culture at the branch campus often differs from the culture at the parent

campus. Research should be conducted to analyze the culture at the branch campus and how it

is different from or similar to the culture at the parent campus. In addition, it would be helpful

to know how branch campus culture impacts the strategic planning process at community

college branch campuses.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation presents a product for community college branch campus leaders that

is rooted in research and previous strategic planning practices. This product is especially timely

with the higher education landscape, specifically the community college branch campus

landscape, which is rapidly changing. There are opportunities for researchers to build on this

work with the development of additional analysis tools, tools to aid with plan alignment, and

research on campus and institutional culture.

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