

College of Public Health Strategic Planning Process

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Approved by Dean Stanley Lemeshow

Our 2003 accreditation site visit, which occurred a few weeks after Dr. Lemeshow was appointed the school's first permanent dean, included a critique of our old strategic plan and the process by which it was created. The site visitors recommended that we make this a top priority. In 2004, we invited several persons who are regularly engaged in consulting with clients on strategic planning to advise us. Out of these consultations a process was designed that began in September 2004.

The process included rewriting our vision, mission and values statements. A series of planning retreats were conducted among the faculty and key administrative staff members to systematically examine our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Out of these discussions emerged a number of strategic objectives and a core set of strategies and tactics to help us reach those objectives.

A core strategic planning committee was appointed, consisting of eight faculty and staff members and an external facilitator. The committee met bi-weekly over a period of 6 months, conducted surveys, personal interviews, and focused groups with faculty, staff, students, and external constituencies, and reviewed a variety of information on the current status and future challenges facing the school. The plan went through several drafts and was discussed at both executive committee and faculty meetings before the final adoption of a 5-year strategic plan for the school in April 2005. The plan term is 2005-2010.

A good strategic plan needs to include an implementation plan and a performance scorecard that tie directly to the strategic objectives. Public Health's plan includes a detailed five-year implementation plan with specific targets, accountable persons, and timeline. As a part of the strategic planning process, the College adopted a series of performance measures described as "strategic indicators," linked to the seven principal goals of the strategic plan. The indicators are updated periodically and communicated to the faculty and other constituencies.

A strategic plan is a living document. Periodic review of planning assumptions, plan progress, and performance targets are necessary to maintain focus. During 2007, we have been conducting a mid-term review of our 5-year strategic plan. This review has included a revisited environmental analysis conducted with focus groups during spring quarter, including faculty, staff, students and alumni. These groups described changes with regards to internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats. Each group also listed what it considers to be the college's top three priorities for the remainder of the strategic plan term.

We presented this input to the faculty at its annual fall retreat. The faculty further refined the comments for the updated plan. Next week, we will include our Dean's Advisory

Board in the process as well. We expect to complete the update by the end of the calendar year.

My tips:

- Bring together the right people, beyond executive leadership. Ensure representation of all key stakeholders during the process. We included faculty, staff, students, alumni and our Dean's Advisory Board. Report results to stakeholders.
- Leadership must signal that the strategic plan is a top priority. By committing their time and energies to strategic planning, our college's dean and executive committee make it a top priority.
- Engage a strategic planning professional. This year, we have benefited from the expertise of a planning consultant in the university's Office of Human Resources. In 2004 and 2005, we depended on the skills of strategic planning professionals in the medical center.
- Recognize that strategic planning is about defining yourself by deciding who you ARE and who you ARE NOT. The key is to develop your objectives and focus your energy in achieving these objectives.
- Expect a 6-month timeline for your planning committee to produce a document ready for review by key stakeholders. Allow an additional month to six weeks to complete implementation plan and benchmarks. Follow-up monitoring of benchmarks or strategic indicators is important to ensure that the plan is being used.
- Ensure that your final plan connects with the college's priorities. Decisions from budgeting to personnel to space planning should be related to the strategic plan. A high level of alignment between the plan and implementation actions is key to the successful execution of the plan.
- Designate a staff person who will take ownership of the process. Clearly, the strategic plan process should follow faculty governance procedures. The content of the plan is shaped by stakeholders. External advisors can help facilitate the process. However, it is helpful to have an internal staff person who can keep the momentum going.