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Transforming Student Affairs Strategic Planning into Tangible Results

Simone Himbeault Taylor
Malinda M. Matney



The Division of Student Affairs at the University of Michigan has engaged in an iterative strategic process to create and implement a set of long-range goals. This strategic journey continues to evolve, bringing together the guiding framework of strategic planning steps, a reflective process with an assessment component within each step, and a group process approach to support both individual growth and organizational change.

The Division of Student Affairs at the University of Michigan (U-M) is engaged in an iterative strategic process. One critical component of this process has been creating and implementing a set of long-range Division-wide goals meant to last for 5 to 7 years. This “strategic journey,” begun in 2000, is continually evolving, bringing together the guiding framework of strategic planning steps, a reflective process with a prominent assessment component employed within each step, and a group process approach to support individual growth in service of organizational change. Taken together, this model has advanced the Division’s direction by managing from an informed perspective and shaping a leadership with a shared vision. Ongoing assessment efforts

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have contributed to establishing and defining Division-wide goals, using research findings to inform the goal formulation steps of the strategic process.

U-M is a highly selective public research university. It is primarily a residential campus with approximately 40,000 students located across 19 schools and colleges (23,000 undergraduates with the balance in graduate and professional programs). The Division of Student Affairs, like similar divisions at other institutions, serves all students and encompasses a comprehensive array of functions (e.g., intergroup relations, career and personal counseling, sexual assault prevention and awareness, housing, health services, LGBT affairs, student unions, and many others). This also includes numerous effective faculty-student affairs partnerships, such as living-learning communities, research, curricular offerings, and faculty positions within academic units.

Within a highly decentralized institution, most Divisional units have previously engaged in independent strategic planning to create and support their own missions. A new model sought to identify and leverage common threads to complement, not replace, unit efforts. We determined that this combination of units was bound together by a common mission of student learning and development of the whole student and a commitment to shaping an environment conducive to effective learning in a diverse campus community. A diverse group of Divisional leaders entered into a Division-wide strategic planning process with a strong commitment to student learning as the focus of their work.

We will describe a model for conducting systematic planning at the Divisional level; demonstrate an interactive and reflective process, using quantitative and qualitative research; and highlight the manner in which an iterative process investing in staff can transform planning into action with the effect of deep organizational change. This model was created at a large and complex university. However, the principles involved can work at any scale. They depend on the cooperative work of staff across units, a challenge shared by the largest and smallest of campuses. Whether working with six or 60 leaders, intentional planning grounded in the best strategic practice applies to any organization seeking substantive and lasting change.

Literature

Several themes became apparent within the literature. Campuses often seek, and are called on to provide, quick solutions and instant gratification for organizational change. Leaders wishing to make decisions based on real information rather than rumor, and believing that human capital is our strongest asset, need to leverage the benefits of a systematic, inclusive approach to change management. This deliberate action will provide best results for enduring change. This literature review provides guidance for establishing an appropriate structure and process for the strategic effort. It considers the essential aspects of human engagement to effect meaningful organizational change and understanding the frameworks in which that change can occur.

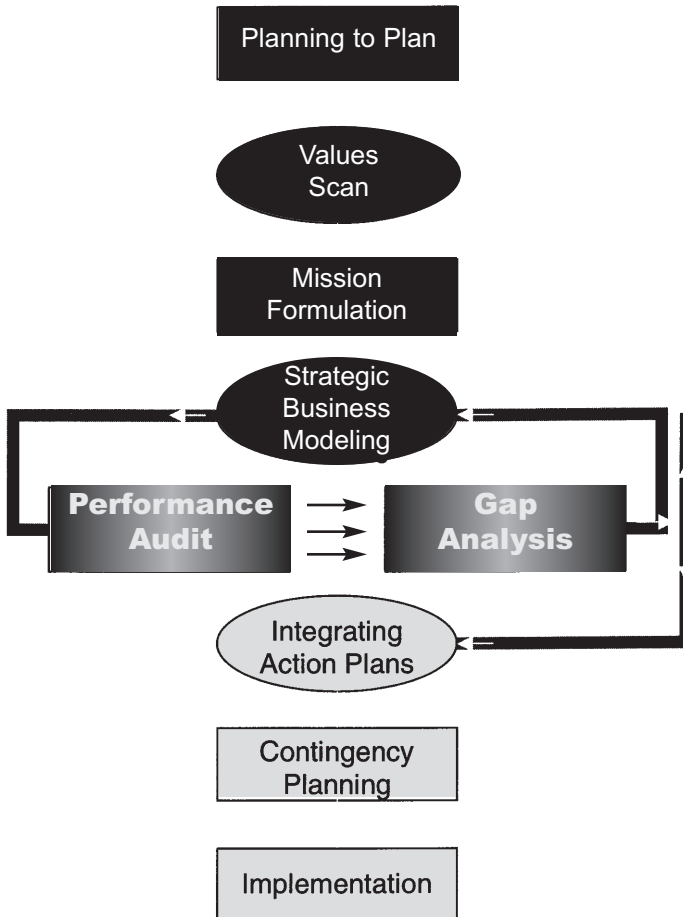
Birnbaum (2000) argued that each management approach represents a “fad” with a limited life cycle. These fads come and go as managers are in constant search for the next answer. While many approaches have been tested—and often discarded—over the years, organizations committed to purposeful management continue to seek ways to move forward in a fast-changing world. Regardless of approach, the “bottom line” remains the same in the drive toward building and sustaining effective and efficient organizations. To the extent that each “fad” or model contributes ideas that may translate into specific cultures, there is value in being conversant with many management perspectives. According to Birnbaum, a plethora of management approaches have been introduced in higher education over the years, most of them derived from the business and government sectors. Management by Objectives, Total Quality Management, Continuous Quality Improvement, and Business Process Reengineering represent some of the more popular approaches embraced in whole or in part by higher education.

Structure

Another valuable lesson from the strategic management model literature is the importance of beginning with a fundamental structure for change. Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer (1993) offered a structural model that begins with Planning to Plan and ends with Implementation. The authors considered the importance of defining conceptual building blocks (such as values and mission) before engag-

ing in the more tangible Strategic Business Modeling (environment scans, gap analyses) that leads to Action Plans that ultimately result in Implementation (see Figure 1). Such a structure would allow planners to follow Covey's (1989) principle to "begin with the end in mind" and offer a structural blueprint to stay true to the intended plan.

Figure 1
Goodstein Model



Reflective Process

While the Goodstein structure provides a helpful framework of the systematic steps of strategic planning, it does not address the processes within each step. For this, we turn to the reflective practice literature. Schon (1982) provided general principles for reflecting in and on practice. Wells and Knefelcamp (as cited in Upcraft, 1994) advocated an eleven-step theory to practice. Student affairs theorists such as Strange and King (1990) promoted a deliberate theory and research to practice approach that includes the steps of theory formulation, research, values, practice, and evaluation. A consistent theme in these models is the critical role of grounding efforts in the literature and the intentional use of relevant data in making decisions and shaping direction. The emphasis on theory and data in informed decision-making provides a strong rationale for integrating a thoughtful research component through any strategic journey. It also provides the bridge between existing knowledge and information and the unique human intervention associated with intentional reflective thought and action.

Change Management

Strategic planning represents its own rubric within management perspectives with its own array of permutations. Mintzberg (1994) suggested that substantive, fundamental fallacies exist in the application of strategic planning processes and indicates that the term “strategic planning” itself may be an oxymoron. His notions address an aspect increasingly present in much of today’s planning literature: the importance of the planners themselves in any process undertaken. Management approaches vary in the degree to which they consider humans. Senge (1990) is a leading proponent of the powerful role of individuals in creating a “learning organization.” Learning organizations involve several aspects: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning (Senge, pp. 7–10).

These principles reveal themselves repeatedly as fundamental to organizational change. Senge’s areas addressed aspects of human investment and empowerment, and they have the capacity to integrate well with the structural and more data-driven components offered in strategic models. They emphasized the need throughout the change effort to remember that people inhabit processes. Senge’s model has

been a strong influence—directly and indirectly—in the field of change management (Kezar, 2005a), including Senge’s naming as one of the “Strategists of the Century” (“Strategists,” 1999, p. 39).

Increasingly the change management literature addresses the human dynamic associated with effecting lasting change. Quinn (1996) described a process of “deep change” in which self-understanding translates to individual change which, in turn, changes our organizations. His premise was that once in touch with internally driven leadership, individuals are empowered to effect lasting organizational change. Covey’s (1989) emphasis on personal change and Blanchard and O’Connor’s (1997) call to manage by values were examples of the human capacity emphasis found in the popular management literature. More scholarly contributions are found in Adams’ (1998) edited volume promoting “leadership in action,” in particular the contribution of Joiner’s (1986) working principles (in Adams, pp. 38–64) and Richards and Engel’s (1986) suggestions of visioning champions (in Adams, pp. 236–56). Kotter (1996) outlined an eight-stage process for successfully changing organizations, and Kegan and Lahey (2001) postulated how the intentional use of internal and social languages can impact organizations. The common theme in these works is a growing emphasis on individual and organizational “transformation.” Hackman (2002) addressed transformation at the group or team level and offers perhaps one of the more creative and insightful approaches to team management by advancing a self-management team model. This literature creates a solid argument for the essential role of the individual (and team) in creating and sustaining organizational change. If the strategic planning literature provides the structure for the effort, the change literature informs how to leverage people to fully realize the structure.

Organizational Frameworks

Structure and individuals, however, function within defined organizational frameworks and these too influence the process as Bolman and Deal (1997) have asserted. Bolman and Deal (1997) inform our process by identifying the meaningful and often overlapping frameworks in which strategic management occur. Their model includes examining organizations and other issues through structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames. Their reframing of organiza-

tions acknowledges that many concerns may have multiple solutions and that most solutions have rational and irrational components. Using multiple frames allows us to maximize the perspectives from which we view potential change. Cohen and March (1974) referred to an array of rules for managing the human interaction components of an organization. These rules will be discussed later when we describe challenges with engaging staff.

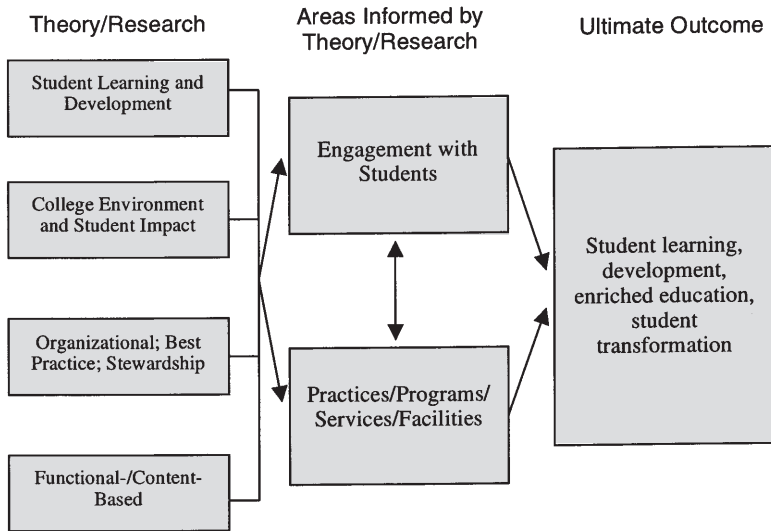
If the ultimate aim of undergoing a strategic planning process is to effect deep change to internal organizational structures, it is critical from the onset of planning to engage in a process that will result in meaningful, sustainable outcomes (such as, in this case, intentionally contributing to student learning and development). This requires a carefully delineated plan to examine and define the essence of the organization. Informed by the literature and with a structure in place, appropriate parties must be engaged and the process continually monitored and championed. To that end, the Division of Student Affairs engaged (and continues to engage) in an intentionally executed strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Process

Beginning in 2000, the Division of Student Affairs launched a major strategic planning process with the purpose of effecting deep organizational change. “Deep change” refers to Quinn’s (1996) concepts of a journey of personal change that leads to changing the organization to become one that has vision, takes risks, and creates excellence. The ultimate purpose deep change serves is the optimal contribution by the Division to student learning and development. One way this is achieved is to develop a shared understanding that theory and research informs practice and that this grounded orientation elevates practice from a simple set of activities to interventions of purpose (see Figure 2).

Drawing on current strategic planning literature, the Division employed a modified version of a structure offered by Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer (1993). Their model fit well with the “deep change” concepts we sought to employ and included a strong belief that empowerment of individuals was key to success. Utilizing such a systematic and deliberate model should in no way suggest that each step was approached with a clear and understood end in mind. In the

Figure 2
Theory and Research Informs Practice



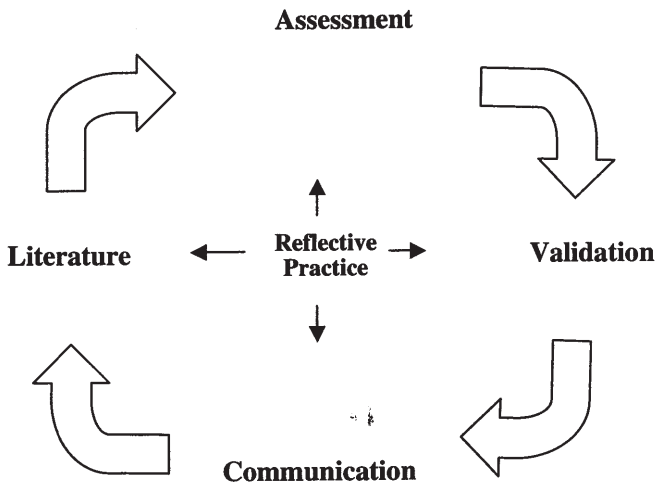
parlance of Quinn (1996), we sought to “build the bridge as we walked on it.” Enough trust in the process design was needed to risk moving forward even as we tested and modified our ideas. Having the foundational structure proposed by Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer in place allowed the findings from one process to inform the next. “Bridge building” requires logical, orderly steps to ensure stability. We were clear that we needed a blueprint in hand and the critical support posts installed to provide the structure before we could “build the expanse.” The model proposed by Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer offered an initial structure for determining where the Division was going (values scan, mission formulation), surveying the internal and external environment (strategic business modeling), establishing the goals that would actualize the mission (integrating action plan), and bringing the goals to life (implementation).

In order to ensure a comprehensive approach to planning, executing, and evaluating, adequate reflection was required. The Division applied an approach to each structural step in the Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer framework that intentionally considered the current literature,

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engaged in assessment efforts, validated findings, and communicated direction. Borrowing from the Strange and King (1990) model, a graphic depiction of this reflective strategic planning model is offered in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Reflective Strategic Planning Process



Planning the Plan, Values Scan, and Mission Formulation

In order to execute a meaningful strategic planning process, it was necessary to assemble a group to work as a team with enough power to lead major change, a group Kotter (1996) referred to as a “guiding coalition.” A senior administrative team “planned the plan” (i.e., built the support posts of the bridge) and brought together 45 positional leaders—predominantly unit heads and major supervisors from the 25 organizations comprising the Division—on a regular basis. Their charge was to work in a participative style to execute the next two steps of the model proposed by Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer to determine organizational values, revise the mission, and develop a set of shared principles for working together. An iterative approach with concrete guidance intended that the unit staff (through their unit

heads) were engaged, informing the process, and moving forward with the leadership on important Divisional decision points. While the outcome of this component was variable, this itself provided meaningful information about unit readiness for division-wide engagement. These components comprised the building blocks for the strategic goal work.

Strategic Business Model

With the essential building blocks in place (mission, organizational values, and shared principles), the Division was prepared to engage substantively in the “strategic business modeling” step. This translated to a specific goal setting subplan, depicted graphically below. This subplan is comprised of establishing goal parameters, and engaging in substantive data input and analysis and validation in order to create goals.



With a mission in place, defining goal parameters was an exercise in determining the criteria that a “good” goal would need to satisfy. Examples included assessing whether the goal was (1) achievable, (2) clearly articulated, (3) supported, and (4) enhanced institution goals, fitting with the Division’s values and mission.

The ultimate aim was to derive and implement a set of key Division-wide goals (distinct from unit-level efforts). Optimally these Division-wide goals would address the most compelling concerns and provide the impetus for developing cohesive, integrated, interdisciplinary educational interventions in the Division’s programs, services, and facilities. In order to determine these goals, we dedicated substantial effort to the Inputs and Analysis stage of this plan, using several assessment initiatives as described in the following section.

Goal Identification and Validation Process

Students, faculty, and Divisional staff were solicited for feedback regarding what issues were on students’ minds and what areas of focus

the next goals for the Division of Student Affairs should encompass. While the focus of this paper precludes engaging in extensive detail regarding specific research methodology and findings, the process used followed accepted protocol in the qualitative research literature regarding focus group methodology and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lin, 1998; Kirk & Miller, 1986; Yin, 1994). We grounded our questions in the key principles articulated in the Division's mission statement (student learning, development of the whole student, diverse campus community, partnerships, and student transformation). An analysis of strong common themes across groups then generated an aggregate set of major themes cutting across all groups. A report developed by a full-time student affairs research staff member and her student staff was used by the "guiding coalition" to inform the next step of shaping strategic goal areas.

Engaging Divisional leaders to conduct focus groups resulted in important process outcomes associated with the Reflective Strategic Process Model (see Figure 3). By participating in the assessment, the involvement of focus group facilitators served as affirmation of their own experiences rather than externally imposed findings. Rather than creating a situation in which positional leaders could discount the research findings as being counterintuitive to their work, the leaders were able to make direct connections between the findings from the aggregated information and the focus groups or interviews they themselves conducted. This started the reflective process in a tangible manner and facilitated communication of findings.

The results of this strategic planning data gathering effort were viewed and applied in a variety of ways. The information was combined with findings from several surveys of and about U-M students as well as with philosophical documents from national organizations such as the American College Personnel Association (2004, 1998, 1996), the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2004, 1998), the American Association for Higher Education (1998) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002). These sources represent a return to the "literature" component of the Reflective Strategic Process Model. In many ways, the literature, as well as the leadership's professional judgment, confirmed the results of the focus group feedback.

The most notable outcome from this information was the creation of long-range goals for the Division of Student Affairs. Goal areas were analyzed in terms of which were dominant areas (which directly served the Division's mission) and which were "in service of" these more dominant areas. As a final assessment component for setting goals, we returned to a broad-based "validation" and "communication" of the Reflective Strategic Planning Model. A web survey provided complete text for all the proposed goals. Electronic mail messages invited students, faculty, and staff to provide feedback. In addition to rating goals and descriptions on a scale of "fine as is," "fine with small modification," and "needs major change," they were also asked to offer narrative comments regarding the proposed goals. The leadership considered comments from all constituencies in revising the goal language prior to engaging in a final "validation" of the goals.

The Division was now poised to launch aggressively into goal implementation with the confidence that the goals were well grounded in current theory, research, and institutional culture and that a critical mass of staff members were prepared to advance the mission of the Division. The goals reflected areas for intentional collective emphasis. It was understood that these goals were so fundamental to the essential work of the Division that an array of efforts already existed to support their direction.

On the Journey of Deep Change

The Goodstein, Nolan, and Pfeiffer (1993) model reaches completion with Implementation. Guidance for our own implementation processes came from the Reflective Strategic Planning model (literature, assessment, validation, communication) and our ongoing reflection about lessons learned from the goal setting effort. Returning to the organizational change and framework literature, we were reminded of the important message of how individual understanding translates to transforming selves and organizations (Quinn, 1996; Kegan and Lahey, 2001; Hackman, 2002) and how all frames of the organization must be employed in managing change (such as Bolman and Deal's [1997] structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames).

Managing Resistance

Any successful process would need to continue to engage others

actively: the engagement of Divisional members would shape the process and the outcome. One outcome sought was the ongoing transformation in staff that would both represent change and create more change. Clearly, in any large organization levels of commitment and comfort for organizational change will vary greatly by individual. While a critical mass committed to change existed from the start, positional leaders varied in their support or opposition of a more centralized Divisional vision. As described earlier, these positional leaders were derived from the unit heads (or area heads within larger units) across the Division. Cohen and March (1974) spoke to eight rules of leadership in an “organized anarchy”: one rule addresses the importance of facilitating oppositional participation. We believed that it was critical to our success to have all key organizational voices represented. Another helpful rule was to provide “garbage cans” (i.e., alternative mechanisms outside the planning process for important issues not immediately relevant to the issues at hand that might distract from moving forward with the change agenda). Spending time, persistence, and being mindful to not overload the system were other helpful rules from Cohen and March.

“Interruptions” as Opportunities

During this process, Divisional and institution-wide work continued with its own new surprises and challenges. From student protests on timely issues, to 9/11, SARS, the East Coast blackout, the tsunami, alcohol and hazing concerns, the U-M Supreme Court case, and budget crises, many international and local issues competed for our attention. Sometimes this contributed to continuing tension inherent in balancing immediate crises with long-rang planning. Conflicts needed to be managed so that immediate issues could be addressed while not minimizing the importance of a long-term vision for the organization or providing permission for detours or barriers to the Division’s committed direction, a lesson often needed regarding issues of complexity and diversity (Smith & Parker, 2005). Indeed, many crises called on staff to commit to our mission and live our organizational values. There were opportunities to apply our reflective model.

The introduction of outside consultants also created an important, if not initially envisioned, means of advancing our strategic planning. In order to address staff overload, consultants were hired midway

through the strategic planning process to assist in managing the goal-setting component of the model. While the consultants proved helpful to senior leadership in managing the bigger picture, the positional leaders found the introduction of outsiders disruptive and rebuffed their efforts with vigor. The positional leadership group was vocal and the senior leadership listened and subsequently dismissed the consultants. This act was pivotal in achieving enhanced trust, credibility, and commitment with the broader leadership. From this point on, a bonding occurred that allowed the internal group process to progress much more smoothly.

While not as tidy as a controlled experiment where one can directly attribute change to a specific intervention, clearly the process of engaging in an intentional, iterative, reflective, and participative planning process had its impact within and beyond goal setting, reflecting openness to multiple ways of learning (Kezar, 2005b).

Goal Implementation

Similar to the initiation of the goal-setting process, the first step in Implementation was to plan the plan. For this, a subgroup of ten positional leaders was selected and joined together to propose a method for goal implementation. This subgroup delineated and managed the steps to go from goal identification to implementation. Drawing symbolically on a metaphor introduced by the vice president that there are many legitimate, unique ways to “get to 9” and that the most important task for our Division was to have a shared notion of what “9” is, the subgroup recommended developing “9” statements for each goal. Each “9 statement” was comprised of 15–20 statements that the broader leadership group reacted to, altered, and validated, paving the way for the next assessment effort. An example of a “9 statement” for the Community Goal is provided in Appendix 1.

The subgroup proposed a two-phased model toward goal implementation. In the systems management world, the two phases would be framed as “as is” and “should be,” with the notion that we need to learn where we are in order to know where we want to go via a gap analysis. In phase 1 (the “as is” analysis), a standardized method (survey) for gathering key information directly from units on all existing goal-related efforts was developed and executed. It was expected that the resulting gap analysis report would inform phase 2, ostensibly the

“fill-in-the-gaps” implementation of the goal initiative. At this point the broader leadership group demonstrated signs of strategic planning “fatigue.” In response, the decision was made to locate the goal work within a subgroup and to encourage more links directly with the units themselves. This shift to a smaller group was positively greeted by the larger group that wanted to continue the movement toward goals but were ready to be released from making every decision collectively.

This group symbolically named itself the N.I.N.E. group (2004) as a double entendre harkening to the “9” metaphor of shared vision and serving as an acronym for “New Information, Not Evaluation.” This label sent an important message throughout the Division that the steps toward goal implementation would be nonthreatening and nonjudgmental. The purpose was simply to recognize, organize, and link existing Division-wide efforts to the newly defined goals. This would allow existing effort and existing models to be more focused on learning outcomes, ultimately operating more effectively. This is one example of how sensitivity to the political framework (as proposed by Bolman & Deal, 1997) of the organization was addressed.

The N.I.N.E. group created a web survey that was sent to each unit leader (see Appendix 2). For each goal, leaders were asked to provide specific examples of initiatives that addressed the goal at large and then to indicate, by checking the appropriate boxes of the “9 statements,” which specific aspects of the goal the initiative addressed. For example, for this Community goal, 107 existing initiatives were submitted. Of these, 12 were described as addressing all the “9 statement” objectives within this goal, and the others addressed a subset of the objectives. The web survey also asked for ratings and narrative comments regarding perceived level of Division of Student Affairs (DSA) collaboration and to describe assessment efforts, such as satisfaction surveys or student outcomes evaluations.

Note that this process took a full year of effort. Far from this being perceived as negative, it is another important example of how process can represent an outcome in and of itself. The process of completing the survey—because it was directly grounded in the goals and concrete manifestations of delivering on the goals—caused staff to gain a deeper personal understanding of the individual goals and to engage in active reflection on how their unit might contribute to these Division-

wide priorities. The assessment also served as a means of communication and an impetus for triggering the reflective process. The result was not simply the gathering of data but also served to advance the learning and buy-in to the goals at a deeper level within the units. The report was placed on the Divisional Web site so that all staff could learn about the study findings.

Application of Results

The findings of the survey were compelling, causing reconsideration of phase 2 of the goal implementation process, which was originally conceptualized as forming goal groups to create new goal-related initiatives. The survey revealed many goal-related initiatives already were being executed, leading to the conclusion that it was not the absence of intentional goal-related efforts (since 19 units reported 124 goal-related efforts), but the absence of data on the impact of existing initiatives that was the fundamental gap requiring priority attention. While there was clearly room for introducing new initiatives and seeking economy of scale and synergies from existing efforts, this was clearly not the chief issue. This was a powerful and insightful finding for the Division and its future. Furthermore, while there was a wide array of measurement regarding specific events, few went beyond attendance figures and satisfaction surveys (output) to define the effect of those efforts (outcomes).

The most unexpected finding related to goal achievement was not finding a gap in the “what” of our work but in the “so what” of our efforts. The large number of initiatives coupled with minimal substantive assessment pointed the way for a course adjustment for phase 2 of goal implementation. Based on the research findings, the broader leadership validated that emphasis in the coming years needed to be less on the creation of new initiatives and more on new assessment methods to discover the ways in which outcomes are being met. Three unique sets of work were identified for emphasis in the next phase: staff training initiatives on key issues of interest (e.g., diversity and privilege; assessment methods), creating an infrastructure to encourage and sustain cross-functional initiatives, and actively measuring student outcomes.

Today, with a core group of almost 60 staff now practiced in writing concrete outcome measures, as a result of training at the annual lead-

ership retreat, this should result over time with the distribution of a wider research and assessment effort within the units to complement the broader centralized efforts. Already, we have seen evidence of a cultural shift toward assessment. A key example is a pretest and posttest assessment constructed as part of a comprehensive, all-staff Divisional diversity training program from its beginning, allowing us to evaluate its impact throughout this program. It is a next meaningful step in the intentional iterative journey to advance the Divisional long-term direction.

Implications

From this strategic journey to date, there are valuable implications both for researchers and organizational leaders.

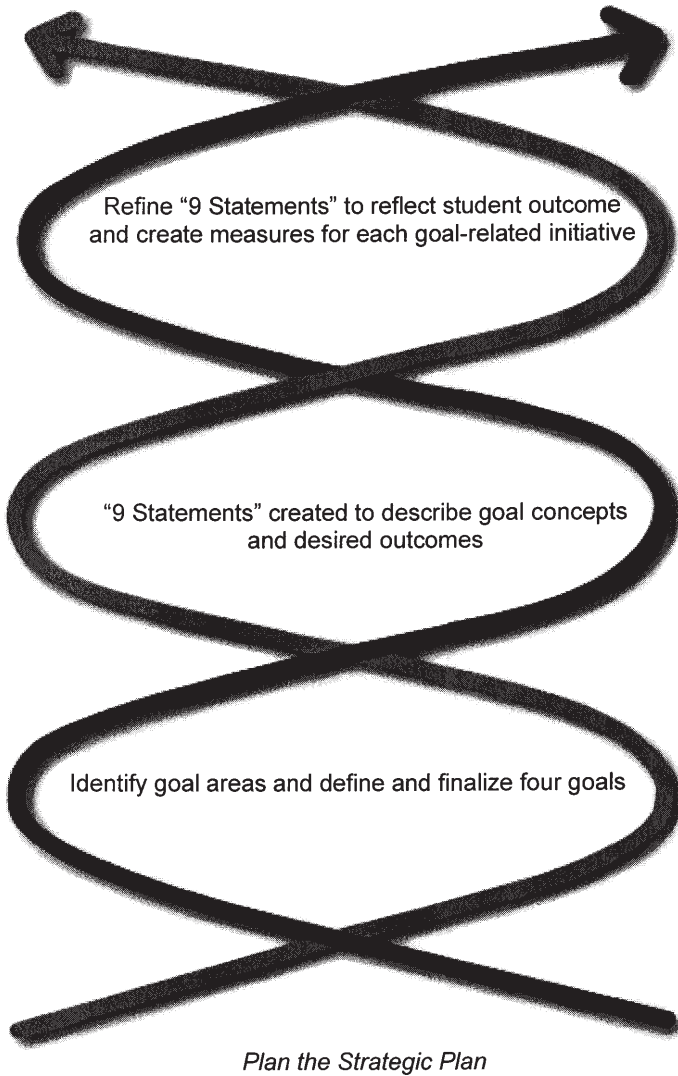
The strategic process is not an event, but an ongoing journey.

The processes outlined here demonstrate the ongoing growth in Divisional staff and the incremental achievement of organizational change. With each iteration of our process, the organization works on many of these goals at an increasingly elevated and refined position, as illustrated in the helix of Figure 4. This dynamic model allows no “dust collection.” Trust building, prolonged feedback gathering, and repeating transparent data collection efforts at numerous points are key components of this process. The leaders guiding such a broad effort and the staff engaged in the effort must trust this process for an effort to succeed.

Evidence of progress reveals itself in tangible and intangible ways.

The reality of strategic planning differs greatly from the orderliness of most models. In spite of this difference, we could see clear advancement toward our desired outcome. We could see evidence of palpable change in Divisional staff and our approach to our work during the first 3 years of the journey. For example, annual retreat evaluations asked leaders to position themselves on a change quadrant: Denial, Resistance, Exploration, and Commitment. In the first year, all quadrants clustered heavily between Resistance and Exploration. By the third year, the clusters shifted to Exploration and Commitment. Another example represents change in shared language (a concept presented by Bolman and Deal, 1997). Leaders and staff regularly employed goal language in discussions. Flowing from this, new

Figure 4
Helix of Iterative Strategic Goal Process Outcomes



Division-wide committees embedded relevant Divisional goals within their own charges.

Interrelated processes provide synergy.

The university's mission, values, and goals helped shape the Division's mission, principles, values, and goals. Divisional goals represent one major element of an even broader strategic planning effort. This effort includes strategic data planning, staff professional development, academic linkages, resource stewardship, and a research agenda in order to manage from an informed perspective. These pieces represent the multiple strands that travel separately and sometimes intertwine to forward the overall strategic direction. The reflective strategic model may manage all of these components.

A question's framing influences the answer.

"Establishing a sense of urgency" is Kotter's (1996) first of eight stages for leading change. Even if the motivation behind change is "continuous improvement," there is a strong tendency only to "fix what is broken." Despite being driven toward excellence, an external motivator helps to effect change. This motivator may be something that needs to be "fixed," or perhaps fiscal pressures. Leaders of a change process must consider carefully how questions are posed and how findings might be framed.

Anticipate and understand staff resistance and fatigue.

Conceptual understanding does not mean complete trust or investment in a process. Using a "guiding coalition" of 45 (and eventually 60) unit leaders provided a critical mass to guide a large organization's new direction. Continuous communication of a consistent message throughout the organization is time and resource intensive, but this effort is worth the return. The good news about staff resistance is that it may mean that group members care about and are protective of the organization. This care can be beneficial to the change process if staff feelings are observed and acknowledged; this care can help identify key staff leaders for various components of the process.

Within an ongoing process without a natural and apparent end, it is important to watch for "strategic fatigue." Change is slow and tiring. Providing openings for staff to enter and leave the process allows for greater sustainability over time, even though it might mean sacrificing

critical talent in the moment. The leaders of the process must try to remain several steps ahead of the process, be open and flexible to how new information influences the overall process and specific steps, invite others to share leadership over substantive parts of the process, and not become demoralized by others' fatigue. Reading relevant literature and connecting regularly with others who value the work can provide the necessary and valued boost.

Assess, Document, Validate, and Communicate

Documentation and assessment are vital for endeavors in which communication is key. The data collection and analysis for our goal setting and initiatives were intensive and sensitive. Students, faculty, and staff needed to feel confident that they were heard and that appropriate information could remain confidential. Consumers of the information needed to feel confident that they were reviewing accurate data. The voices of those expressing their views needed to be treated as precious cargo; this was the only way for ultimate change to be embraced. Validation, as a strategy for ensuring that voices are not only heard but also that there is appropriate meaning-making occurring, is a powerful tool to ensure that what you think you know is true. It allows for participative management, in which those invested in the outcomes have an opportunity through iterative processes to shape the outcomes.

Conclusions

Any process—from strategic planning to specific individual change—is a series of trades, unintended consequences, and serendipity. Staying flexible and not always seeking the “right” answer provides great possibility. There is no dust collection in a dynamic process. The particles are not permitted to stay in place long enough to settle. While not as tidy as an approach with a delineated beginning and end, this model respects the interconnectedness of multiple processes. An iterative model allows for the incremental growth and change that opens the road for the next stage of the journey. In the end, the specific content outcomes—such as particular goal identification—might mean far less in the bigger picture than the process that leads to the content. The process for change continues to serve as a deep change intervention.

Appendix 1

Sample “9 Statement” for: Community

Goal—To foster an environment that respects and appreciates the value of both differences and similarities, which supports the well-being and success of all community members.

Definition—Community embodies an environment that is open, safe, inclusive, and accessible to all of its constituents, where members feel that they matter and that their well-being and success are supported.

Students feel like members of the University community and can describe examples of being valued at and connected to the University.

Students understand, can articulate, and demonstrate how to live/function in a sound, healthy diverse community; have skills that contribute to developing a healthy community; and have experienced the positive aspects of community and its implications for citizenship. Students are concerned with others’ welfare on campus and assume personal responsibility for developing a safe and flourishing community.

Students feel camaraderie with their peers, and increase their meaningful interactions with diverse peers, faculty, and staff as well as find others with similar interests/goals.

Students feel physically and emotionally safe on campus, know where to find assistance, and can name a “safe place” on campus. They understand value and practice the process of civil discourse. They experience productive dialogue, feeling safe expressing their points of view, ideology, spirituality, and special interest.

Individual and group student behaviors promote a diverse, democratic community. Students are eager to participate in campus issues; feel responsible for activities on campus; and create a strong, positive, safe, campus climate in partnership with faculty and staff.

DSA facilitates students’ navigation of the University. Students feel welcome in all DSA units.

Staff and faculty feel like members of the University community, and they can describe examples of being valued at and connected to the University.

Appendix 2

N.I.N.E. Group Web Survey

Gathering the information

In this survey, please describe the programs, services or facilities that your unit is pursuing with regard to the various "nine" statements. As you describe these initiatives, keep in mind the regular, intentional, planned work that your unit pursues. We do not anticipate or expect that every unit will have an initiative for every statement.

Thank you for your help!

Program, service, or facility?

Please make a selection.....

Name of initiative:

(Throughout the rest of this survey, "initiative" will indicate the program/service/facility.)

Brief one sentence description of initiative:

If this initiative is in partnership with other units, are these units (check any that apply)

- DSA unit(s) Non-DSA unit(s)

When does this initiative usually take place? (check all that apply)

- All 12 months January February March
 April May June
 July August September
 October November December

How frequently do you do this initiative? Please make a selection.....

Please make a selection.....

Who participates in this initiative?

How many undergraduate students.....

How many graduate students.....

How many professional students.....

How many faculty members.....

How many staff members.....

How many other people.....

Please specify which other people participate in this initiative:

What information does the unit collect about this initiative? (check all that apply)

- Number of participants Number of registrations for future events
 Satisfaction surveys Measured changes in future behavior (which may include both increases or decreases in observed behavior)
 Other Please specify:

Appendix 2, continued

Output measures

Please indicate below whether this initiative is intentionally designed to contribute to the realization of any of the following "Nine" statements. Please review all the statements about *Diversity* in their entirety, and then choose the statements that are the focus of this initiative. (Check only those that are the focus.)

Diversity (goal focuses on staff development)

- Staff understand, discuss, and further their knowledge about key elements associated with diversity, such as multiple social identities, social justice, privilege, multiculturalism, cross-cultural issues, and inclusion.
- Staff understand the implications of these key elements for themselves, others, their work and others', campus climate, and current social and political issues.
- Staff understand, discuss, and further their knowledge about the advantages and challenges of diversity in the University community, and address individual, group, and systemic discrimination.
- Staff feel accepted based on their social identities.
- Staff recognize their own privilege, the responsibility that comes with it, and its role on campus and in society.
- DSA staff reflects the diversity of the student population.
- Your unit acknowledges, appreciates, respects, and celebrates social identity differences and similarities, and seeks to strengthen itself as a diverse organization.

Please indicate below whether this initiative is intentionally designed to contribute to the realization of any of the following "Nine" statements. Please review all the statements about *Student Learning* in their entirety, and then choose the statements that are the focus of this initiative. (Check only those that are the focus.)

Student Learning

- Students perceive ample opportunity to and participate in active, experiential curricular and co-curricular programs sponsored or co-sponsored by DSA.
- Students verify these experiences are meaningful to their education.
- Students proactively engage in their own learning and that of their peers.
- Students are able to articulate objectives for their intellectual, personal, and social learning while on campus.
- Students understand and practice reflection in and on their learning.
- Students understand, appreciate, and develop lifelong learning skills.
- Students develop skills for "learning how to learn."
- Students increase their self-efficacy with academic and personal learning pursuits.
- Students can identify what was significant about their U-M learning experience.
- Students can identify how their behaviors, values, philosophy, and lives are more developed than when they arrived on campus.
- Students have experienced broad learning and personal satisfaction with DSA's collective offerings.
- Students view DSA as a partner in the education of students.
- Faculty and staff view DSA as a partner in the education of students.
- Staff creates and strengthens student learning and development experiences based on relevant theory, student development issues, and current research.
- Staff purposefully integrates active learning principles and strategies in its work.
- Staff can articulate how its work contributes to student learning.
- Staff can and do measure student learning and development.

Appendix 2, continued

Please indicate below whether this initiative is intentionally designed to contribute to the realization of any of the following "Nine" statements. Please review all the statements about *Community* in their entirety, and then choose the statements that are the focus of this initiative. (Check only those that are the focus.)

Community

- Students feel like members of the University community.
- Students can describe examples of being valued at and connected to the University.
- Students understand, can articulate, and demonstrate how to live/function in a sound, healthy, diverse community.
- Students have skills that contribute to developing a healthy community.
- Students have experienced the positive aspects of community and its implications for world citizenship.
- Students are concerned with others' welfare on campus.
- Students assume personal responsibility for developing a safe and flourishing community.
- Students feel a comradeship with their peers.
- Students increase their meaningful interactions with diverse peers, faculty, and staff.
- Students find others with similar interests/goals.
- Students feel physically and emotionally safe on campus, know where to find assistance, and can name a "safe place" on campus.
- Students understand, value, and practice the process of civil discourse.
- Students experience productive dialogue, feeling safe expressing their points of view, ideology, spirituality, and special interests.
- Individual and group student behavior promotes a diverse, democratic community.
- Students are eager to participate in campus issues.
- Students feel responsible for activities on campus, and create a strong, positive, safe, campus climate in partnership with faculty and staff.
- Your unit facilitates students' navigation of the University.
- Students feel welcome in your unit.
- Staff and faculty feel like members of the University community and can describe examples of being valued at and connected to the University.

Appendix 2, continued

Please indicate below whether this initiative is intentionally designed to contribute to the realization of any of the following "Nine" statements. Please review all the statements about *Life and Wellness Skills* in their entirety, and then choose the statements that are the focus of this initiative. (Check only those that are the focus.)

Life and Wellness Skills

- Students think critically, solve problems effectively, make sound decisions, and know the value and skills of teamwork.
- Students are knowledgeable and effective leaders, verbal and written communicators, and cross-cultural participants.
- Students explore and affirm their personal values and ethics, understand and practice global citizenship, and examine their spirituality.
- Students gain, can articulate and can demonstrate personal, interpersonal, workplace, civic, and financial skills.
- Students pro-actively engage in healthy behaviors and activities, make responsible lifestyle choices, and can identify ways in which they have improved their behavior toward a healthier lifestyle.
- Students know how to access and receive appropriate physical and mental health and wellness services.
- Students actively participate in and understand their present health care, and feel prepared for their lifelong health care.
- Students are able to articulate areas of social, emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and recreational wellness, a healthy lifestyle, and health and wellness knowledge and skills acquired at U-M.
- Students understand consequences of unhealthy behavior.
- Staff facilitates students' development of life and wellness skills.

Describe any outcome measurement efforts your unit undertakes related to this initiative.?

We have just two more final questions. Click here to answer them.

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