

NEW MEXICO INSTITUTE OF MINING AND TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECT

Strategic Planning Process Guidelines

The success of a strategic planning initiative is directly tied to the effectiveness of the process developed to engage participants in discussion, planning, and decision making. An effective process will enable the strategic planning committee to move from individual participation through team collaboration to consensus building.

The following guidelines are recommended for adoption by the committee:

1. Maintain a future focus throughout the process.

The strategic planning process needs to be focused on the future direction of the university with a three to five year time horizon that clearly states the university's vision, mission, goals and objectives, and establishes priorities for the future. 'Strategic Planning' is a process by which the senior administration of the university, in consultation with faculty, administrators, managers, employees, students, alumni, and other interested parties collaborate to plan for the future direction of the institution, and develop strategies to achieve that future. The strategic planning process drives us to answer three basic questions:

1. Where are we now as a university?
Objective: *Assess the present situation of the university.*
2. Where do we want to be in the future?
Objective: *Determine the desired direction for the future of the university.*
3. How do we get there from where we are now?
Objective: *Define the strategies to achieve the future direction of the university.*

2. Maintain a focus on the process as well as content.

Although the goal of the strategic planning process is to develop a 3-5 year plan, the emphasis on 'process' should not be lost in the task, as the process builds commitment, trust, buy-in, collaboration and consensus within the university community required for plan development and execution.

- The process will aim to increase university participation in meetings and forums and moving participants from participation through collaboration to consensus building.
- Senior administration will be available to meet with the Strategic Planning Committee periodically during the process.
- The process should guarantee protection of confidential and sensitive information discussed during meetings.
- The Strategic Planning Committee and Task Force committees will have a charter that describes their purpose, membership, roles and responsibilities, organization and structure, and deliverables for their work.

3. Maintain a focus on institution-wide inclusion.

The strategic planning process should aim for full inclusion of all university constituencies to insure they have opportunities to participate in the process and voice their perspectives on the future direction of the university.

- Strategic Planning Committee members and task force members will be selected from across the university and community from all categories and positions.

4. Maintain a focus on information sharing.

The strategic planning process should aim to maximize non-sensitive information and data sharing, both within the committee and with the greater university community, including committee and task force progress toward developing the strategic plan.

- Insure communication in and out of the Strategic Planning Committee using available technology: project website with progress documents, educational materials, and options for comments and feedback, to include possible live webinars.
- Website development and coordination will be managed through ISD.
- Hold open town hall and student meetings periodically.
- *The Strategic Planning Committee needs to establish guidelines for information and data sharing with the greater university community.*

5. Drive the strategic planning process with data.

The development of the strategic plan needs to be data driven to collect, analyze, interpret, and report findings and results.

- Assign responsibilities within the Strategic Planning Committee for data and information processing and reporting in support of the committee's work.
- Data requirements need to be specific to answer questions from the committee and task forces, and may include budgets, unit performance, accreditation, faculty and student data, etc. as required.
- Develop metrics to evaluate the process and progress toward the goal.

6. Collect data through an institutional-wide and stakeholder survey.

The strategic planning process will benefit from an institution-wide/stakeholder survey to collect preliminary information on current and future issues that need to be addressed by the Strategic Planning Committee in support of a SWOT Analysis conducted early in the process.

- A Delphi survey will be posted on the website for all members of the university community and external stakeholders to identify the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats to the university, plus questions on the vision and mission of the university.
- Feedback results to the university community and external stakeholders.

7. Focus on development of the strategic plan content from the inception of the project.

The development of the plan document is an important activity that should be discussed by the strategic planning committee early in the strategic planning process to provide a template for data collection and analysis, and discussion of issues and initiatives.

- Early development of a strategic plan section template for consistent organization and format.
- Early assignment of who will manage development of the content of plan documents.
- Identify resources required to complete this task from within and outside the committee structure.

8. Focus on strategic plan execution.

As a part of the strategic planning process, the execution of the plan needs to be discussed and included in the document. Feedback from attendees at recent public meetings identified this as a major factor in the success of the process and the plan.

- By the conclusion of the process, develop guidelines for operational plans to be completed by academic, administrative, and research units of the university.
- Develop metrics for success, expected levels of performance, and a process for monitoring and evaluating the university's progress in implementing the plan.
- Assign formal responsibility and authority for plan execution.

9. Develop committee meeting guidelines to maximize discussion and decision making.

The Strategic Planning Committee needs to establish meeting guidelines that define behavioral expectations of committee members, to include the following examples:

- Stay focused on the agenda and task.
- Attack problems and not each other.
- Eliminate 'side bar' conversations.
- Find agreement and seek consensus.
- Acknowledge and respect differences of opinion.
- When identifying a problem or concern, suggest a solution.
- Seek opinions from other team members.
- Stay focused on how to improve the university, not dwell on problems.
- Get to a mutual understanding of committee member concerns and problems.
- Ask each other to clarify positions and interests.
- Preserve self-esteem.
- Avoid 'PLOPS'¹ and untested assumptions.
- Seek options for mutual gain.
- Maintain member confidentiality and sensitive information and data.

¹ A PLOP is something that is put on the table for discussion, but goes nowhere and is never addressed.