THE PLANNING PROCESS: CAMPUS & FACILITY PLANNING

Planning is a decision making process— within a college or university it should be on-going and continuous. Often, it is seen as a one-time event. A campus plan is less effective if it is perceived as final— life is not that simple. All plans should be capable of changing as assumptions, circumstances, resources, and priorities change— as they assuredly will.

The design of a building should anticipate change as well— especially a science building where changes in the disciplines and our knowledge of how students learn has had, and is likely to continue to have, a dramatic impact on facilities. Planning for a new building should not be considered an independent event, but should be done in the broader context of institutional planning.

Colleges and universities are a complex web of interdependent and interrelated programs, departments, individuals and communities of students, faculty, staff, and administrators all centered to some extent on the institutional mission. At the core is knowledge— learning it, creating it, sharing it, transferring it, transforming it, and storing it.

Mission describes the purpose of this wonderfully complex and creative organism called a college or university. Mission, the guiding purpose of an institution, changes rarely.

Vision, on the other hand, is about the future and, as such, is a critical and essential beginning to the planning process. It is a statement, consistent with the mission, about what the institution, the division, or the department wants its future to be— of what it will become. One definition of vision comes from Bert Nanus, Professor Emeritus of Management at the University of Southern California, Nanus defines vision as: *a realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization*.

Planning starts with a vision for the future. The vision reflects the mission and provides a sense of direction and a set of goals to be realized. The academic plan further defines the vision. It is here that the institution establishes its goals for the future, which include a point of view about such things as:

- new or changing degree programs

- changes in faculty distribution

- departments that will grow or change

- programs to be nurtured

- desired enrollment targets

- student/faculty ratio

- and faculty loading.

All other institutional planning will flow from the goals, objectives, and priorities of the academic plan.

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KEY POINTS

- Planning starts with a vision and several fundamental questions: what do you want your students to know and be able to do? How do you want them to learn?

- The vision is consistent with the mission, about what the institution, the division, or the department wants its future to be— of what it will become.

- To be effective, comprehensive planning must weave academic, financial, and student life planning together with campus and facility planning.

- Comparisons to real and aspirational peer institutions is valuable data for decision making and for guiding planning discussions.

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Planning, then, is a deliberate process to realize the vision. To be effective, comprehensive planning must weave academic, financial, and student life planning together with campus and facility planning.

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The academic plan becomes the embodiment of the institutional vision.

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Of all these interwoven plans, it is the academic plan that is fundamental. All other plans within a college or university should be designed to accomplish the academic plan and thus the vision.

All college and university planning, whether for the entire campus or a single building, has the same constituent elements or steps. The more collegial the process (which it should be), the greater the participation of faculty, staff, students, and administrators, the more positive the outcome – and the longer the timeframe for developing the plan. Genuine participation, however, is essential for building consensus.

Coincident with the development of an academic plan, the institution should prepare an assessment of the current situation. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is common during this step.

So too is an audit and assessment of the existing buildings, campus, infrastructure, and environs and an analysis of the degree to which spaces, buildings, and environs support current programs and planned changes in learning, teaching, and research.

At the same time, financial resources should be assessed in terms of such factors as operating costs, existing and planned capital costs, and deferred maintenance.

Benchmarking is a useful tool at this point. Comparisons to real and aspirational peer institutions is valuable data for decision making and for guiding planning discussions.

The academic plan becomes the embodiment of the institutional vision. The assessment of campus, facilities, infrastructure, and financial resources describes the current situation of the college or university.

The next step in the planning process is to define the programmatic, financial, staffing, and facilities required to achieve the institutional vision. Essentially, this is a description of needs – prioritized needs.

Once the needs are described and prioritized, the institution can explore various alternatives for meeting the needs. These alternatives can be tested and costs and benefits developed.

Those alternatives that more fully support the institutional mission, address priorities, and have a greater impact on achieving the vision will most likely be selected as first-phase projects. The plan is then documented for fund-raising and for implementation.

At a different scale and a different focus, this same process can be applied to the planning for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs and facilities. It all starts with a vision and several fundamental questions: what do you want your students to know and be able to do? How do you want them to learn? ■