



1. Introduction

This tool is intended to help colleges and consultants identify a college's pre-existing obstacles to successful strategic planning. It assesses a college's previous experience in strategic planning while helping to spot leadership, cultural, and capacity issues that accelerate or limit the planning process. It is intended as a time-saver as well as a tool for adjusting expectations for the strategic planning process. It has been designed for consultants and college leadership teams, particularly the CEO, to have realistic conversations about strategic planning *before* launching a planning process. As a tool for prompting reflection, discussion, and, ultimately, *action* we hope it can assist a college to produce a hard-hitting and truly strategic plan.

INSTRUCTIONS

Base your responses to the inventory on this scale:

0 = None. There is no evidence that this characteristic is present.

1 = Marginal. The characteristic occurs in some instances but as an episode, it is neither widespread nor systematic.

2 = Partial. The characteristic is true in some instances but is not widespread.

3 = Fully. The characteristic is systematic and fully present.

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2. History of Planning

All colleges have a history of planning although some may not have produced a strategic plan that clearly sets out alternatives and identifies strategic choices. The questions below are intended to capture the *current* planning status as a foundation for the new planning process.

1. How does the college view its current planning process?

	0 = No	1 = Marginal	2 = Partial	3 = Fully
The current strategic plan has served the institution well	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decision-makers are satisfied with the current plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college has high expectations that the new strategic plan will create institutional change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current strategic plan is the umbrella to which all other planning efforts link	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current strategic plan drives budget setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The current strategic plan is how the college assesses its overall performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college actively networks with other colleges outside of the state in one or more critical areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



3. Reasons for Planning

The motivation(s) a college expresses for planning often dictates the seriousness and intended consequences of plan.

1. Which reasons are most important in this college's decision to create a new strategic plan?

	Not Important	Marginally Important	Important	Critically Important
To improve the college's ability to act strategically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve overall performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve performance in one or more key areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To respond to or manage a crisis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To help stakeholders achieve a shared understanding of strategic choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet accreditation requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet other external mandates, e.g., required by a state system or accrediting agency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To satisfy one or more board members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
As an opportunity to have deep conversations about issues that really matter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



4. Leadership for Planning

Our experience facilitating strategic planning processes clearly demonstrates that the difference between a mediocre plan and a hard-hitting strategic plan is adept leadership. These questions probe a college's leadership and whether it is fully ready to take on the challenges of strategic planning.

1. To what extent are these leadership characteristics present?

0 = Not Observed 1 = Marginally Present 2 = Partially Present 3 = Fully Present

The CEO has experience in developing one or more strategic plans for a college

The CEO expresses clear commitment to strategic planning

The CEO has a record of educational or academic accomplishment that inspires confidence in her or his ability to lead a strategic plan

The CEO and her or his management team will ensure that external groups, businesses, agencies, and partners are fully involved in the process

The CEO will be visible throughout all *internal* strategic planning events

The CEO will be visible throughout all *external* strategic planning events

0 = Not Observed 1 = Marginally Present 2 = Partially Present 3 = Fully Present

The CEO and her or his leadership team recognize that strategic planning is difficult, painstaking work

Members of the CEO's leadership team have experience in creating a strategic plan for a college

The CEO and her or his leadership team can differentiate between operational and strategic planning

The CEO and her or his leadership team understand that the success of the proposed strategic plan rests on their ability to implement it

The CEO and her or his leadership team understand that strategic planning requires clear choices and are committed to act on those choices

The CEO and her or his leadership team are prepared for conflict inevitably arising from strategic planning

The CEO and her or his leadership team will create and act on an internal and external communication plan

0 = Not Observed 1 = Marginally Present 2 = Partially Present 3 = Fully Present

There is a history of engagement with consultants in high-level work

The CEO and her or his leadership team understand that they will need to edit the draft planning document to ensure it fits the college

A high-level liaison will be assigned to oversee strategic planning and serve as liaison with the consultant

The CEO and her or his leadership team are committed to tying the overall college's budget to the new strategic plan



5. College Culture

The interaction between leadership and culture most often determines whether the college will be successful in the planning process as well as whether its new strategic plan will be implemented.

1. The culture of higher education explains why things happen and perhaps why they don't. The questions below probe the prevailing culture at a college wishing to embark on strategic planning.

	0 = Not observable	1 = Marginally observable	2 = Partially observable	3 = Fully observable
Change is supported	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college knows where it wants to be in five and ten years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a sense of continuous improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are examples of cooperation and mutual aid across the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is resistance to ideas that are generated outside the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college believes it is excellent and has strong evidence to back that up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The college believes it is excellent but has little or no evidence to back that up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a shared commitment to innovation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0 = Not observable 1 = Marginally observable 2 = Partially observable 3 = Fully observable

There is a willingness to explore new data and scenarios including those developed outside the college

The college sees value in data reported to external agencies, e.g., state systems, in its planning efforts



6. Capability and Capacity for Strategic Planning

Innovative change depends on a college's capability and capacity to engage in planning. They aren't the same thing. Capability refers to individual and group expertise to grasp the choices that a college must make and to use (and process) data and information to identify and explore those choices. Capacity is the power to accommodate strategic planning in the midst of other competing activities and, afterward, the ability to fully implement the new strategic plan.

1. How does the college assess its capability and capacity?

Not observable Marginally observable Partially observable Fully observable

The college understands where it has data capability gaps to address strategic planning, e.g., retrieval of data, converting that data into actionable information, generating comparative data, and using that information across the college

The college understands that to implement its new strategic plan it may need to increase its overall capacity, e.g., creating new conversations, engaging in continuous quality improvement, setting collaborative metrics, and holding budget hearings

Not observable Marginally observable Partially observable Fully observable

The college frequently uses data about student outcomes, especially persistence and learning, to make decisions.

The institution's governing board requests and receives routine data on institutional performance, especially student outcomes

Faculty, staff, and administrators see a clear and visible connection between data, institutional planning, and resource allocation

Staff, faculty, and administrators understand the difference between data that is routinely collected and reported and data that is strategic or actionable in nature.