ASSESSING UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANS: A TOOL FOR CONSIDERATION

Shannon Chance
Brenda T. Williams

ABSTRACT

This article explores the use of rubrics as tools for assessing the quality of university-developed strategic plans. While tools exist for assessing the quality of the planning process, such tools are not readily available for assessing the resulting product or the overall quality of the plan itself. Specifically, a rubric is described that has been designed and field-tested for the purpose of evaluating the strategic planning document produced at the university level. This approach builds upon outcome assessment methods developed in the business sector and proposes a tool tailored for use in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the use of rubrics as tools for assessing the quality of university-developed strategic plans. While tools exist for assessing the quality of the planning process, such tools are not readily available for assessing the product or the overall quality of the plan itself (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Kaufman & Grise, 1995). A number of tools do currently exist for evaluating business–related plans (University of Wisconsin, 2005). However, these tools are grounded in linear business models, which are not well suited to the variables found in higher education settings (Presley & Leslie, 1999; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997; Shahjahan, 2005; Swenk, 2001). Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence identified and described a host of differences between business and education and they clearly articulated the need for planning approaches tailored to higher education.

The rubric described in this paper was designed by a team of doctoral students enrolled in an educational planning course at The College of William and Mary. The team's methods for developing and field-testing an assessment rubric are described. The objective is to share findings of the project with scholars interested in educational planning. This assignment represents an effort to address concerns raised by Adams (1991). Adams articulated three crisis areas in planning: (a) definition and identity, (b) intellectual or scientific foundation/theory, and (c) evidence of success and utility. This article seeks to address one of these areas – success and utility – which may in turn enhance an understanding of identity, purpose, and intentionality of strategic planning in higher education (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The overarching framework used in this assessment rubric is built upon Holcomb's (2001) five critical questions for fostering change in schools and Allison and Kaye's (2005) recommendations regarding strategic planning for non-profit organizations. The call to conduct this type of assessment has come from both inside and outside of higher education. Such assessment helps address demands for increased accountability in higher education and across the non-profit sector.

DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

There are many ways to define *strategy*. Pearson (1990) described the way strategy is used in higher education: to set direction, to focus effort, to guide "consistent concentration of effort through time," and to promote flexibility (as cited in Presley & Leslie, 1999, p. 202). Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) define *strategic planning* as "a formal process designed to help an organization identify and maintain optimal alignment with the most important elements of its environment" (p. 15).

Presley and Leslie (1999) remind us that the main goal of strategic planning in higher education is to enhance practice. They join Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) in noting the best result of planning is providing guidance to an organization. While traditional planning was operations-driven, today's strategic planning constitutes a process for seeking opportunity. Most contemporary organizations actually still use traditional (rather than genuinely strategic) planning methods, and thus miss opportunities for creative and proactive response. Many scholars in the field of planning agree that by defining a collective vision and charting a course aligned with this vision – through a truly strategic and ongoing planning process – an organization can effectively respond to unforeseen challenges in advantageous ways (Barnetson, 2001; Cutright, 2001; Gordon, 2002; Rowley, *et al.*, 1997; Swenk, 2001).

STRATEGIC PLANNING: FROM BUSINESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Strategic planning was introduced in the private business sector during the 1960s and brought to the university and other parts of the public sector in the late 70s and early 80s, following its documented success and subsequent refinement (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997). Presley and Leslie (1999) note during this time, the planning process in higher education adopted an internally oriented and very linear form of planning, which was more appropriately termed "long-range planning." Long-range planning is generally more prescriptive than truly strategic planning, which allows flexibility to incorporate unforeseen changes and opportunities.

Presley and Leslie (1999) further note that the business world shed strategic planning as a central tenet in the late 1980s. Criticisms of corporate practice lead "strategic planning" to be eclipsed by concerns for "operational effectiveness" and "strategic management" (p. 209). Currently, higher education's strategic planning practices are being criticized in much the same way that the practices used by corporate America were attacked in the 1980s. While some scholars seek more complex ways to understand planning and its efficacy, others have called for more radical approaches, including development of entirely new methods of strategic planning (Kunstler, 2005; Presley & Leslie).

Conversely, Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) assert that in business, strategic planning "has held promise for well over thirty years" and note, "for today's colleges and universities, no longer immune from the world in which they live, strategic planning can be a logical and effective method of intervention, defining an appropriate direction toward a future in which they will flourish" (p. 320). Yet they ask: Are business strategies appropriately transferred to higher education?

These researchers are among the many insisting rationalist, linear, business-type models alone are too limiting. Corporate models lack the type of flexibility necessary to align institutions' aspirations with their quickly-changing opportunities and their fluid contexts. Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) suggest higher education needs special attention to address unique circumstances – circumstances that are quite different from the fast-paced business world which remains untethered by educational and service missions, public accountability, or the need for broad-based buy-in. Traditional business-oriented planning models inadequately reflect the complex inter-relationships inherent in higher education.

LEARNING FROM LINEAR MODELS: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

Traditional business models reflect a belief in linear Newtonian-type cause and effect relationships that seldom describe the complex decision-making processes occurring in higher education (Cutright, 2001; Swenk, 2001). This tradition is steeped in orderly, goal-driven metaphors (often mechanical or political in nature), which "assume decision making is rational – decision makers act to achieve goals" (Barnetson, 2001, p. 147). These metaphors fit with commonly held assumptions and paradigms of the "nature of the world" and "human nature." Linear metaphors tend to assume tight control is required to avoid eventual break down; they fit with Western scientific, religious, and political views, which presume that people will act in their own self-interest if unregulated (Barnetson).

Some instruments were developed to assess outcomes in business despite the fact the machine/factory model, which emerged from the industrial revolution, generally emphasized process over outcomes (Dolence & Norris, 1995, cited in Cutright, 2001). Outcome assessment tools have recently been adapted for use in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of plans for various non-profit endeavors. For example, outcome-based approaches developed for business purposes are now heavily used by federal funding agencies to ensure productive use of public funds (Davis, 2007).

"Project monitoring" was first developed by the United Nations to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of aid programs (Wilson, 1997). The UN's Mission Plan identified three dimensions: (a) project inputs and tasks, (b) project outputs and level of accomplishment targeted, and (c) project outcomes including "the impacts and effects of project operations and performance on the beneficiaries" (Wilson, 1997, p. 33). Monitoring was conducted both internally (in the field) and externally (by experts). Such dimensions are used in many logic models today, both formatively; through "benchmarking" and collecting performance data alongside the activity, and summatively; in assessing accomplishment at the end of the project (Davis, 2007; Wilson, 1997).

The business model relies on high levels of predictability, and thus it is far too limiting for direct

application in higher education. Many tools developed using the business model do, however, contribute to the field of planning by providing graphic depictions of relationships between components. Many models also include evaluation of specific components that were traditionally overlooked in strategic planning. Graphic depictions are the crux of the critical-path model, the logic model, and the theory of change or "onion" model (Davis, 2007; University of Wisconsin, 2005).

The standard logic model graphically illustrates connections between inputs (including funding); outputs (e.g., programs, activities); and outcomes (e.g., changes in behavior of participants). The logic model used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development "supports the five fundamental components for managing a program: identification of need, activities/interventions, outputs, outcomes, measuring performance. The function of the logic model is to integrate program operations with program accountability. All five components must work together for a program to operate in an efficient and effective manner" (The Center for Applied Management Practice, n.d.). In 2001, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation identified four types of logic models in current use: (a) a theory approach, (b) an outcomes approach, (c) an activities approach, and (d) a research performance approach (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2007). These models are commonly used to assess viability of a proposed program to help ensure results, but all rely on high levels of predictability.

Graphic representation of linear models includes the critical path model described at NetMBA (2002-2007) that was first developed by DuPont in 1957 to graphically illustrate a sequence of actions required to implement a project, to predict the length of time required for the project, and to indicate "which activities are critical to maintaining the schedule and which are not." This model was developed for routine projects with low complexity and high predictability. A similar "network" model known as PERT (the Program Evaluation and Review Technique) was developed at around the same time for the United States Navy and this model allows for a higher degree of uncertainty because it accommodates ranges of time required to complete various activities. These models are highly deterministic. Both stress temporality, both are limited by their ability to accommodate unknowns, and both frequently yield overly optimistic time projections even in situations that are more predictable than those found in higher education.

Another graphic tool, known as the "onion model," delineates fundamental, core issues from peripheral issues that have less influence on a given situation, person, or organization (similar to the dimensions described by Rapoport, 1999). This model has been used successfully in both education and business, although it seems to deal with a very focused set of concerns within any given diagram. Curry (1983) used the onion model in the field of education as a "method for describing learner interaction with content," (as cited in Polhemus, Swan, Danchak, & Assis, 2005). Alexander and Robertson (n.d.) used the onion model to show relationships – such as those among stakeholders in a business venture – and to graphically illustrate pressures (as arrows) exerted by various groups on others to prompt change. Applications by Curry and Alexander and Robertson suggest the onion model may be useful for understanding various relationships found in higher education. The tool could also be used in assessing strategic plans to identify core versus peripheral issues and evaluate relationships among various issues.

With linear models, specific, measurable outputs, or "deliverables" must usually be predefined. In these cases, the plan locks the organization into a pre-determined path. This limits the possibilities for flexibility and innovation. The linear model requires a level of predictability which higher education does not enjoy, because the system requires input from multiple levels inside and outside the organization.

In related work, Shahjahan (2005) described the negative impact deterministic methods for obtaining research funding have on society's collective creativity. He stated that research and publishing mechanisms, including grant-funding processes, restrict possibilities for innovation; a researcher must essentially know what he or she is going to find in order to promise deliverables before initiating the research, and must be able to state these in quantifiable terms. In this same vein, Presley and Leslie (1999) noted that strategic plans in higher education are remarkably similar (rather than inventive or innovative). Why do institutions choose such similar strategies? Are these plans more focused on maintenance than change? Is the consistency a result of a limited model, or a desired outcome?

While Stone and Brush (1996) found formal planning was useful and necessary to the attainment of external validation and legitimacy – and essential to resource acquisition – they also found that

many stated purposes of formal planning are difficult to achieve under conditions of ambiguity and that adoption and consistent use of formal planning were not widespread.

Implementing change in universities has been exceedingly difficult due to high levels of unpredictability. Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1998) indicated inertia, psychological resistance to change, and the need for consensus all slow the change process at universities. They suggest the strongest resistance often occurs when the plan is complete and implementation begins.

Even in business there has been a shift away from such linearity. Presley and Leslie (1999) explained that in the early 1980s research on corporate planning shifted to studying relationships between outcomes and planning processes. Corporate planners moved away from being rigidly prescriptive and rationalist when they began incorporating institutional culture and complexity into strategy formation and implementation. Language used by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004) is fairly consistent with these emerging, non-linear models:

The process of developing [an organization's logic] model is an opportunity to chart the course. It is a conscious process that creates an explicit understanding of the challenges ahead, the resources available, and the timetable in which to hit the target. In addition, it helps keep a balanced focus on the big picture as well as the component parts. (p. 7)

Chaffee (1985) found that while strategy formation in business actually had three facets (linear, adaptive, and interpretive), higher education has stayed in the linear mode. This planning approach impaired higher education's effectiveness in planning by rendering it ill-prepared to interpret and adapt to changing contexts. Understanding non-linear models is crucial to improving strategic planning in higher education.

NON-LINEAR MODELS TAILORED TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) warned that when institutions of higher education try to adopt typical business strategies in strategic planning, most fail. These scholars assert "non-business institutions, particularly colleges and universities, have not had particularly positive results from their experimentation with strategic planning. In many instances, the process has not yielded the outcomes desired for institutions of higher education in ways comparable to business applications" (p. 40). This may be because institutions generally fail to recognize adaptive and interpretive strategies – replicating only the linear strategies. Even when higher education does widen its range of techniques to include adaptive and interpretive business strategies, it still needs to tailor these to its specific characteristics. The planning scheme it uses must reflect dual-governance, for instance, which is much different than the top-down approach businesses typically use.

Funding of higher education is very different from corporate funding. While product research and development in the business world is largely unrestricted, funding mechanisms limit or exclude the possibility for higher education to react in a way that is speedy, off-mission, or lacking broad buy-in from internal constituents (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997). Higher education is organized much differently than business enterprises and, unlike business, the mission of each public school is largely determined by the state. Unique processes and limitations – imposed by legislators and other external loci of control (such as professional and regional accreditation bodies) – ensure that higher education cannot operate in the same manner as private business.

Leslie and Fretwell (1996) asserted strategic planning works best when seen as a continual process of experimentation, which allows multiple decisions to emerge on many different fronts simultaneously. This suggests use of a non-linear model where feedback regarding implementation and context informs upcoming implementation efforts. In such a model, planning is actually the object of the strategic plan. Planning is a tool for setting direction and charting an ever-changing course to effectively enhance the organization's shared vision. In fact, it seems the most powerful plans use three paradigmatic perspectives: (a) a foundation in linear, rational analysis; (b) an understanding of flexibility and adaptability to changing context; and (c) an ability to articulate an intuitive, constructivist organizational metaphor that provides a future-oriented vision of the institution, or interpretive strategy (Chaffee, 1985).

Adjustment during implementation represents such a critical part of the process, it seems this fact should be clearly acknowledged in strategic planning documents. Presley and Leslie (1999) worried that much of the literature discussed only the linear rationalist model (at the expense of the others), and failed to cite the ramifications and/or shortcomings of using that one single perspective.

Similar to the three paradigms enumerated above, Kennie (2002) presented a range of perspectives which have emerged in the field of planning: (a) the formal, rational perspective which includes techniques like SWOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats) analysis and STEPE to gauge Social, Technological, Economic, Political, Environmental aspects of the external environment; (b) the competitive market positioning perspective; (c) the cultural perspective; (d) the performance measurement perspective (which includes the balanced scorecard, benchmarking, and business excellence models); (e) the sensitivity analysis perspective; (f) the "emergent" perspective; and, (g) the scenario perspective.

Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1998) described two major shifts underway, both of which highlight the need for good strategic planning by universities: (a) a change in the way organizations think and make decisions to better visualize what they want to accomplish and then align resources to support that vision, and (b) a shift from emphasizing content delivery to emphasizing learning. By instituting a process of "thorough self-examination, by discovering the opportunities that exist and may be exploited by the institution's primary constituencies, and by determining the relevant niches that are available and that fit its unique capacities, a college or university can begin to shape its own destiny" (p. 48). Using futuristic thinking, universities can become "learning organizations" that continually process information to acquire and integrate new knowledge for improving practice.

CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) indicated traditional support for higher education has been eroding. Higher education needs to adapt and change in order to maintain its position at the world's forefront, and failure to change could jeopardize the United States' position of prominence.

Traditional support waned as institutions became too removed from the needs of the larger community. "Some faculties and administrators took academic freedom as a shield for increasing autonomy and disconnection from the public they served" (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997, p. 50). As a result, states have continually required formal planning – master planning, comprehensive planning, long-range planning, or strategic planning – in an effort to "rationalize" their systems of higher education (Presley & Leslie, 1999).

The call for accountability in higher education has been on the rise since the 1980s when universities adopted strategic planning as a major vehicle for dealing with this call and with an external environment that was in transition (Presley & Leslie, 1999). Conservative politics, at work in the United States since the 1980s, have pressed for accountability and efficiency, for eliminating waste, and for balancing budgets. By undertaking various types of planning, institutions have often been able to shape change from within . . . rather than be forced to implement changes that were shaped by trustees, governors, elected officials, donors, and other outside the institution (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997).

Demand for public accountability increased steadily throughout the 1990s, in the United States and beyond. Gordon (2002) noted, globally, demands for accountability resulted from a range of shared conditions, such as: (a) new ways to assess accountability through expenditures and performance management, (b) trends to provide education for "the masses" (rather than just for elite males), (c) the increased cost of educating this larger population, (d) an ever-expanding knowledge base, and (e) various changes occurring in the employment sector.

The continually rising cost of attending college in the United States has prompted much of this pressure here at home. Ehrenberg (2002) and Kunstler (2005) noted that the rising price of attending college deters many individuals from enrollment. Kunstler attributes the closure of many universities to declines in government funding, falling enrollment due to rising cost, and pressures that push colleges and universities to run more like businesses. This pressure, he says, has often resulted in "misapplied calculations of cost effectiveness" that have wreaked havoc on many "programs and careers" (p. 173).

Strategic planning is often prompted by outside forces and external stakeholders – such as public officials and board members – but the efficacy of planning may relate to whether the effort is initiated by

forces inside, as opposed to outside, the institution. The range of voices demanding accountability in the United States often includes: state funding authorities; students and their families; various benefactors and financial supporters; faculty, administrators, and staff; those who employ graduates; a host of community businesses, residents, and officials; and board members who take legal responsibility for the actions of their respective institution (Presley & Leslie, 1999; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997).

Despite skepticism regarding the value of plans, the planning process seems quite necessary. With "limited resources, increasing competition, demands to enhance quality, widen participation and so on, processes are required to focus attention, prioritize action and check progress is being achieved" (Kennie, 2002, p. 72). Gordon (2002) maintains "councils and those responsible for external assessment of quality expect individuals and institutions to learn from assessment and to operate within a climate and culture of enhancement informed by reflection, monitoring and benchmarking of practice" (p. 214). A process of monitoring known as "strategic management" is now emerging in higher education, again following trends in the business sector. Monitoring and checking progress are important to both internal and external constituents, and researchers note that these checks are most effective for refining the system when they are conducted internally (Clayton & Ash, 2005; Jackson & Ward, 2004; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1998).

In a 1995 discourse, van Vught asserted universities are assuming greater "responsibility for their own strategic fates. This proactive behavior includes quality and accountability as integral to change and the constant search for strategic opportunity" (in Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1998, p. 13).

SUCCESS OF PLANNING UNSUBSTANTIATED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Contemporary emphasis has been on the *creation* of strategic plans in higher education. There has been a lack of assessment of products and results of strategic planning. This stands in contrast to "work on strategy in the corporate sector [which] has tended to focus on content of decisions" (Pennings, 1985 cited in Presley & Leslie, 1999, p 212). Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) emphasized that "demonstrated results" of strategic planning in higher education are uneven.

The corporate sector conducted extensive research regarding the content and payoff of strategic planning. Yet little research exists to support the efficacy of specific strategies or their link to eventual results in higher education (Presley & Leslie, 1999) or even to determine if, in fact, strategic planning is more effective than other methods (Swenk, 2001). Presley and Leslie (1999), stated:

> We do know that formal and strategic planning can produce fundamental changes in certain circumstances and when it is used in conjunction with adaptive and interpretive approaches. Certainly, though, institutions may plan formally without making substantive changes in their functions or operations. And institutions obviously make substantive changes without engaging in any explicit process of planning or strategizing. The connections between statements and outcomes are unclear at best, because there are statements without outcomes and outcomes without statements. (p. 229)

There is a general lack of literature on methods for implementing higher education strategic planning, and the tendency to implement educational plans without adequately assessing progress apparently extends beyond the United States (Gordon, 2002; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997). Presley and Leslie (1999) raise a number of questions about how the *outcomes* of plans should be evaluated, whether the results differ depending upon reason (internal or external) to plan, and what methods of strategizing and managing plans work best in what situations. They note a number of problems that remain unstudied. For instance, they explain that strategic planning has sometimes diverted resources, attention, and effort away from other important issues. They cite times when strategic planning backfired or "wasted time" through unintended consequences – such as when universities have made poor decisions or have generated unhealthy levels of conflict through planning (p. 208).

Calling for research on outcomes, Presley and Leslie (1999) noted that institutional effectiveness appears to involve "defining and interpreting the nature of an institution's condition and in reaching consensus about its operating strengths and weaknesses. This may be as much a cultural and psychological process – an interpretive process – as it is a rational/analytical one" (p. 228). They also recommended

that an ethnographic case study could prove useful for studying strategy and institutional change. The work of Kaufman and Grise (1995) and the rubric proposed in this article could be used as tools in such an investigation.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The overall meaning of the word "evaluation" seems to be shifting. Wilson (1997) indicated that evaluation now implicitly involves a process of monitoring, with assessment generally occurring at the middle and end of an implementation process. In higher education, the implementation phase of planning most definitely requires monitoring to make sure it can overcome inevitable resistance within colleges and universities. Wilson described Clayton and Perry's (1983) definition of monitoring as "a process of measuring, recording, collecting, processing and communicating information to assist project management decision-making" (p. 32).

Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence (1997) indicated the greatest resistance to change in any setting often emerges at implementation, when the strategic planning process shifts toward the process of strategic management. Without some form of strategic management, a plan is likely to be less effective in overcoming resistance. If a plan fails to outline a way of monitoring and managing its own implementation, it seems doomed to partial or low-level success. This is particularly problematic in institutions of higher education, which have procedures that tend to suppress change. Moreover, faculty members are positioned to effectively veto change since they are the primary providers of education (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997).

Particularly helpful to educational planning is the work of Hunt, Oosting, Stevens, Loudon, and Migliore (1997) who explained the system for control and evaluation should generally: (a) be linked to strategy; (b) be simple and economical to use; (c) measure both activities and results; (d) flag the exceptions; (e) focus on key success factors, not trivia; (f) be timely; (g) be flexible as strategy changes with environmental demands; and (h) be reality-based where written reports are augmented by face-to-face follow-up (p. 193).

Barnetson (2001) recommended the use of performance indicators (PIs) to promote "flexible and detail-free strategic planning" (p. 154) and to monitor the context so that anomalies can be identified and engaged. Using PIs allows organizations to simplify vast data sets and re-align themselves with the environment quickly and effectively. It is clear many organizations use performance indicators in a rigid way, implicitly and/or explicitly adopting rationalist models such as the "balanced scorecard," "business excellence model," or other varieties of the "performance measurement perspective" (Kennie, 2002, p. 78). These corporate perspectives can be used cautiously in higher education. Rowley and Sherman (2001) indicated milestone planning can be helpful to define "the most important assumptions of the plan, the important events to be completed and the intermediate stages for those events, and the sequencing or critical path the events must follow" (p. 306).

Barnetson (2001) strongly cautioned when PIs and milestones are used as conceptual technologies "they constrict information flow by designating what information will be collected and how it will be interpreted. This goal is achieved by quantifying data, thereby decreasing the importance of context" (p. 155). He noted, "performance indicators also constrict information flow by embedding assumptions about goals, values, definitions, causality, normalcy, and comparability into the structure and selection of indicators." While this practice does inherently reduce internal conflict regarding interpretation, it also discourages the organization from asking fundamental questions. Barnetson warned, a planning process which simply imposes conceptual agreement in this manner, or that is set up to reward only straightforward examples of success "may reduce the utility of PIs in planning by stifling the experimentation that leads to adaptation and innovation" (p. 155).

When planners understand the limits of linear cause-and-effect models and create systems that can proactively transform themselves to meet changing demands, they can avoid such pitfalls. Used cautiously, performance indicators and milestone assessment can be part of a healthy learning process.

Allison and Kaye (2005) provided a worksheet for "monitoring and updating the strategic plan" (p. 304-5) which involves (a) assessing overall status and summarizing accomplishments, (b) assessing status of specific objectives both short and long-term, (c) identifying and describing reasons for areas

not accomplished, (d) identifying and listing changes that have occurred, and (e) recording changes to the core strategies that have emerged.

The rubric discussed in this article is designed to evaluate the *strategic plan* rather than the *process*. The process itself can be assessed using Allison and Kaye's (2005) "worksheet for evaluating the strategic planning process" (pp. 307-8) or the work of Kaufman and Griese (1995). However, while the process of writing the plan is important, it seems that many plans do not flourish because a *process for evaluating, implementing, and monitoring the plan* is left implicit or entirely omitted. When the plan was generated for internal reasons it may have the momentum to succeed. The planning process itself may have effectively shaped a new way of thinking that can foster results. At the other end of the spectrum, where the call to create a plan came from external forces, there may not be enough momentum or sufficient shared vision to overcome inevitable resistance to change without careful monitoring and/ or strategic management.

RUBRICS AS TOOLS FOR ASSESSING QUALITY

Both life-long learning and successful strategic planning require self-identity, knowledge, and action (Jackson & Ward, 2004). Chickering and Reisser (1993) indicated the importance of establishing identity, developing purpose, and generally aligning action with purpose or acting with "intentionality." These represent high-level skills in Chickering and Reisser's stage theory and these abilities are as important to organizations as they are to individuals. Rubrics provide a crucial tool for developing critical thinking and for promoting high-level self-awareness among individuals and organizations.

Developing and/or using a rubric for assessment allows one to define and evaluate a comprehensive range of issues that work together to shape overall efficacy of a proposed plan. Rubrics provide a way to achieve a comprehensive, holistic assessment of quality. They graphically illustrate relationships between performance criteria and quality standards.

> At its most basic, a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment. Rubrics divide an assignment into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance in each of those parts. (Stevens & Levi, 2005, p. 3)

Stevens and Levi (2005) use rubrics to conduct complex projects, time-intensive assignments, and any assignment that the organizer struggles to explain in relation to expectations, directions, and grading criteria. They note that rubrics allow instructors to (a) provide crucial feedback in a timely fashion, (b) help equip students to be able to utilize detailed forms of feedback, (c) encourage students to think critically, (d) facilitate communication, and (e) help instructors refine their teaching skills. Rubrics may help "level the playing field" because they communicate expectations more clearly to students with increasingly diverse backgrounds (Stevens & Levi, 2005, p. v).

The benefits ascribed to using rubrics for instructional purposes can also be realized in planning and evaluation in organizations. Rubrics may prove helpful in weighing and evaluating the complex interrelationships involved in planning initiatives.

Rubrics also help to inform decision-making, articulate performance measures, and specify quality expectations. Used as such, rubrics can provide means for enhancing self-awareness *and* for simultaneously addressing increased demands for accountability. Strategic planning represents a "complex design assignment" for any university. The rubric described herein constitutes an ideal tool for understanding and managing the assignment. It can also serve as a means for achieving desired outcomes. Using such tools can render the plan and its results more visible to individuals both inside and outside the institution. They can improve communication among various stakeholders. Rubrics can aid in planning as well as provide a structure for assessing achievement throughout the implementation process. According to Driscoll and Wood (2007), a rubric is quite effective when it is collaboratively modified during the design and/or planning process to help define criteria, standards, and shared definitions. These approaches are ideal for fostering cybernetic or "learning" universities that – like individual students – can learn from their own experience and are able to respond to shifting opportunities in ways that are intentional and that support the long-term vision of the learner.

METHODOLOGY: FOCUS AND STRATEGY

Allen (2006) discussed the use of a course alignment grid to (a) assess how a specific general education program addresses its specified objectives and (b) look for gaps, discontinuity, or "misalignment" so that these areas may be identified and aligned. Driscoll and Wood (2007) promoted a similar matrix – for use in designing a course – that charts how each class session, reading, activity, or assessment item reinforces a range of specified learning outcomes.

The assessment rubric presented in Figure 1 is just this sort of alignment grid. It is intended to help assess the long-term viability of a strategic plan in higher education. It reflects the general format used by Allen (2006) and Driscoll and Woods (2007). It also incorporates Holcomb's (2001) five critical questions as a guide for thinking about what an effective strategic plan should contain. These five questions – "Where are we now?" "Where do we want to go?" "How will we get there?" "How will we know we are (getting) there?" and "How will we sustain focus and momentum?" cover all of the essential aspects of planning described by Allison and Kaye (2005). The planning questions also offer a framework for understanding the function and importance of various components of a plan. Thus, this rubric looks for evidence that all stages recommended by Holcomb (and others discussed earlier) have been considered and addressed in a given plan.

BIRTH OF A RUBRIC

An initial rubric was developed after studying planning theory, investigating two existing university plans in detail, and discussing other educational plans during class meetings. The rubric was then field-tested using recently developed strategic plans created by two institutions of higher learning in the United States. For one university, a draft plan had been completed and disseminated for review and finalization. For the other, a finalized plan had been disseminated by the university and was being implemented. The overall goal of this investigation was to create a useful assessment instrument (in the form of a rubric) designed to achieve an accurate, high-quality evaluation of existing plans.

A paper was developed to briefly describe the two organizations, explain the rationale for this particular comparison, put forth a rubric for evaluating strategic plans, and discuss the findings of using this rubric for evaluating and comparing the organizations' current plans. A comparison of these two very recent planning documents revealed topics of common concern and shed light on the issues, concerns, dreams, and values of two very different east coast universities.

The focus of the first paper was to compare and contrast the strategic plans developed by two different universities. Convenience sampling was used to select the institutions for comparison; two universities were identified as being heavily engaged in developing and implementing strategic plans and as having comprehensive plans readily available for review. In addition, each university's commitment to the planning process was evident. It was projected that comparing plans developed with apparent enthusiasm and broad-based commitment at two very different institutions of higher learning would yield useful findings. These expectations were confirmed in the process of studying and evaluating the two plans, wherein some intriguing commonalities were discovered which will be discussed further.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY AS A STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING VALID ASSESSMENT

The overall strategy for the project involved using Bloom's Taxonomy as a basic outline for determining process. The levels of Bloom's Taxonomy increase in intensity from *knowledge, comprehension, application,* and *analysis* to *synthesis* and *evaluation* (Bloom, 1995/2005). Evaluation, according to Bloom, constitutes the highest order of knowing. It is the most difficult to achieve. Evaluation requires careful integration of each other type of knowing. Drawing on all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to create an evaluation promotes confidence in the overall assessment by helping ensure consideration of multiple perspectives.

The Internet was used to obtain two existing strategic plans for comparison, and the student researchers gained *knowledge* and built *comprehension* by reading each plan. They also read and discussed the theoretical basis for strategic planning and the current practices used in the field (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Holcomb, 2001). Each of the doctoral researchers read both strategic plans and then identified and discussed critical aspects and components of each plan.

The *application* level of Bloom's Taxonomy involved using the knowledge gained in the previous steps to develop an initial scoring rubric. The resulting draft was used to *analyze* each of the two plans separately. This analytic process involved assessing various isolated aspects of the plan (as outlined on the rubric), modifying the wording of the rubric, and then writing text about pertinent aspects of each plan.

The process fostered *synthesis* in several ways. During this field-testing phase, the rubric was refined to integrate theory and practical application (as reflected in the two existing plans). In fact, the rubric itself was initially developed though a process of synthesis using a matrix to cross-reference ideas regarding planning theory proposed by Holcomb (2001), Allison and Kaye (2005), and course handouts.

Using this rubric framework, the students were able to discern similarities and differences between the plans. Both of the plans evaluated were judged to decline in quality following the goals and objectives sections. Both plans seemed effective in articulating a vision for the future, but each lacked information regarding the resources to guide practice, evaluation, and refinement after implementation. Additional plans would need to be assessed using the rubric to determine if this pattern is consistent among university plans. This observed decline does support claims of this nature by Holcomb (2001), Allison and Kaye (2005), Wilson (1997), and others.

The rubric was used to determine a score for each evaluation category in addition to an overall evaluation. This overall score does not represent a simple average of the individual scores, but a holistic assessment of how the strengths and weaknesses complement or undermine each other. A plan that has consistently excellent scores but includes a number of marginal components or even just one or two major omissions or conflicts might be given a poor rating overall.

Tabulating the individual scores on the rubric thus requires *synthesis* to reach a comprehensive and holistic *evaluation* score. Comparing and contrasting the completed rubrics and producing a written analysis for each plan enhanced the evaluation. Integrating newly discovered perspectives constituted another level of *synthesis* intended to enhance the quality of the *evaluation*.

Having a clear and conscious process for reaching evaluation is critical to producing a valid and reliable evaluation. Bloom's Taxonomy highlights the difficulty in formulating valid evaluations, because it places this level of understanding at the summit. One cannot have confidence in an evaluation process when it does not reflect all lower levels of this taxonomy. While the authors of the initial paper had little prior experience in evaluating and critiquing formal strategic plans, they developed and followed a clear and iterative process for making evaluative assessments. The intention was to achieve an evaluation grounded in theory that could be replicated by other scholars.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RUBRIC

Figure 1 shows the rubric developed for this project. The format of this rubric is consistent with recommendations by Driscoll and Wood (2007) where "each component is described with levels of performance, much like standards, into ratings" (p. 108). In this rubric, the top of each column indicates a specific level of quality. Each row represents a different component that should be included in a strategic plan. The block representing the intersection between a column and a row provides detail about what constitutes that level of quality for the given component.

VERTICAL COLUMNS: LEVELS OF QUALITY

The first three levels of quality shown, the headings for the vertical columns in this rubric, are fairly standard – representing categories of "excellent," "good," and "fair "(Driscoll & Wood, 2007). An item in the excellent category strengthens the overall plan. At this level, the component is clearly and thoroughly addressed and is well coordinated with other components in the plan. An item in the good category is addressed in the plan in a helpful way but may be somewhat under-developed. Too many scores at the good level will indicate instability of overall plan. A component in the fair category ultimately weakens the plan. It inhibits success of the overall plan by including information that contradicts other items or omitting some pieces of information that seem critical.

This rubric posits one unique category designed to accommodate a certain level of interpretation among planning teams, which is labeled as "inconsequential." When an item ranks as inconsequential to

the plan, the component may either be missing or be greatly underdeveloped but without severe detriment to the plan. While omission of that single item may not hinder implementation and/or institutionalization of the plan in and of itself, too many omissions indicate instability of the overall plan.

HORIZONTAL ROWS: COMPONENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN

Each row represents a specific component typically found in a strategic plan. This list was derived from Allison and Kaye's (2005) recommended components and from a class handout compiled by Williams (n.d.). The order of the recommended items was established using Holcomb's (2001) five questions as a flow chart, in an effort to make sure each step of initiating, implementing, and institutionalizing the plan would be addressed in the strategic planning document.

These questions ask: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we get there? How will we know we are there? How can we keep it going? It is interesting to note, Holcomb actually refined the last two questions in a way that summarized the intent of our assessment model: How will we know we are (getting) there? How will we sustain focus and momentum?

Typical components of a complete plan have been nested within Holcomb's (2001) framework, and include the following: introduction, organization's history and profile, executive summary, summary of core strategies, goals and/or objectives, support, process for evaluation of the outcomes and refinement of the plan, appendices, and the overall, holistic assessment. The rubric does not mention planning assumptions, thus constituting an area for further research.

INTRODUCTION

A clear and concise statement of rationale for planning should be included at beginning of the plan. According to Allison and Kaye (2005), the introduction is usually written by the president of an organization's board to convey support for the plan.

Organization's History and Profile

A plan should convey pertinent information about the organization and its history. Its text should provide clear evidence that organization's culture and context have been considered and integrated into plan.

Executive Summary

Each plan should contain a well-organized executive summary, which – in one or two pages – references the mission and vision and highlights the core strategies of the plan. This section should brief readers on the institution's planning process and the most important aspects of the plan.

Mission, Vision, and/or Value Statements

Every plan must include a clear vision statement. A high-quality statement of vision and values is inspirational and is expressed in passionate terms; it enhances the overall mission of the organization and enthralls readers to explore the plan further.

Summary of Core Strategies

Core strategies of the plan should be clearly stated and developed with both depth and breadth. They should align with the organization's mission and to be feasible to implement.

Goals/Objectives

Specific goals and/or objectives should be presented with enough depth and breadth to provide direction and ensure feasibility. The document should provide evidence that consideration has been given to financial, administrative, and governance mechanisms in the development of goals and objectives. It should include a convincing strategy for achieving action, with a reasonable indication of who, what, when, where and how the goals will be addressed.

Support

The plan should ensure feasibility by delineating specific goals and/or objectives regarding finance,

administration, and governance to enhance progress during implementation.

Strategy for Evaluating Outcomes

The plan should indicate mechanisms, schedule, and/or key performance indicators for assessing progress during multiple stages of the implementation and institutionalization process.

Strategy for Refining the Plan

The document should outline who will implement the plan, monitor and confirm progress, and refine inadequate aspects so as to institutionalize the plan in a proactive, adaptive, and healthy way.

Appendices

The appendices of a plan should be well organized and should allow the reader to easily locate information necessary for understanding and/or implementing the plan.

Holistic Assessment

Circling or color-coding the level that a plan attains regarding the quality of each component can provide a holistic assessment derived either visually or mathematically. While the method used in this particular study involved a graphic analysis of the overall pattern of quality ratings for each plan, it would also be possible to analyze plans more quantitatively. In such a case, an assessor could assign scores for each quality rating and then weight and average the scores.

This rubric defines an excellent plan as one that provides a comprehensive vision addressing most content areas in a strong way and contains few, if any, areas that are inconsequential or weak. A good plan addresses most content areas at the level of good or excellent and contains only a few inconsequential or weak areas. A weak plan fails to adequately address several pertinent content areas (e.g., when more than a few areas of the plan are weak and/or many are omitted, the overall plan has weak chances for success). An inconsequential plan actually constitutes a weak plan, by using an organization's planning resources without return on investment.

OBSERVATIONS FROM FIELD-TESTING

In comparing the team's assessment of two university's plans, a number of patterns emerged. There is a need to assess additional plans using the rubric to determine if the patterns identified hold consistently among strategic plans developed in higher education.

Both plans started with a clear introduction that explains why a plan was needed. A clear rationale indicating the support of upper leadership appears to be important in fostering the development of a university-wide strategic plan. Both of these plans expressed strong support from upper administrators and widespread investment of planning time and other resources.

Both plans provided some indication of "where they want to go." Each plan included a convincing vision, which can guide future decision-making. It appears planning teams generally know to include this element as part of a formal strategic plan. Stating a clear and inspirational vision constitutes a first-step toward motivating widespread efforts toward common goals. Unless these common goals are also clearly and convincingly delineated, individual efforts to contribute to the general vision will not be as coordinated and therefore as effective as they could be (as seemed to be the case in both plans assessed).

Both plans reflected some confusion in communicating "where they are now." While it makes sense that some groups might omit information on "where they are now," thinking that the current context is obvious to all internal constituents, this information is quite helpful for describing the pre-plan context for internal audiences. It also allows external constituents to understand the plan . . . and it provides a snapshot to allow future comparison (i.e. to gauge change that has occurred since conception of the plan).

Neither plan effectively articulated "how they will get there," "how they will know they are getting there," or "how they will keep it going." Both of the plans studied showed further weakness in explaining "how they will get there." While this tactical component is essential to all plans, neither of these two organizations included adequate information about how they will get where they say they want to

go. Both omitted critical information regarding the financial, administrative, and governance factors necessary to support change. It appears that even plans with high attention to detail in opening phases may have inadequate delineation to ensure appropriate action, assessment, and refinement of programs.

Overall, both plans started stronger than they ended. Despite clearly noble intentions and intense initial efforts, both plans ultimately achieved lower overall probability for success by omitting or under-developing too many crucial components. Based on personal and professional experience with planning in various educational programs and on ideas proposed by Holcomb, it appears that many plans follow this pattern of neglecting to address critical stages of assessment and refinement. This critique of two plans developed by institutions of higher learning further supported this belief.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most comprehensive conclusion of this project is strategic planning is a means, not an end – it requires flexibility and calls an organization to persistently ask "fundamental questions" that require it to continually learn and adjust (Swenk, 2001). Unfortunately, monitoring and learning have been under-recognized in the planning arena and those who develop plans generally underestimate or fail to allocate the time and resources needed to successfully monitor, evaluate, and re-align their plans (Kennie, 2002). The project described in this article involved a review of literature on strategic planning combined with development of a rubric for assessing the quality of plans developed for higher education. With further field-testing, the rubric holds promise for widespread use. Many of the findings were consistent with the review of literature that was compiled before, during, and after development of the rubric. The addition of a "task description" as recommended by Stevens and Levi (2005), which would briefly describe the "assignment" of a strategic plan and would be placed directly above the matrix, could also help clarify the intended use of the rubric and the overall point of producing a strategic plan.

The assessment rubric proffered here may serve as a point of reference for evaluating a variety of types of plans, although, it has been designed and field-tested for use in higher education. The rubric may be useful: (a) at the beginning of a planning initiative, (b) as a checklist for planners when drafting and finalizing a plan, (c) to facilitate movement from "strategic planning" to "strategic management," (d) as a means for checking progress at milestones throughout implementation, and (e) as a framework for continually and purposefully re-aligning the plan to meet changing opportunities and conditions.

While acknowledging the potential utility of this tool, the developers of the rubric are cognizant of Presley and Leslie's (1999) caution that the blanket application of any tool could actually lead to higher levels of standardization. Using standardized methods could inadvertently weaken the goal of promoting continual feedback to increase self-awareness, purposefulness, intentionality, and ability to act upon changing opportunities.

To avoid misdirected standardization, the authors of this paper recommend that organizations should conscientiously assess the applicability of each descriptor in the rubric to determine its appropriateness. This rubric can (and indeed should) be adapted – in a spirit of collaboration and collective refinement described by Driscoll and Wood (2007) – to enhance a university's effectiveness in strategic planning.

One conscious attempt to promote variation among plans while using this rubric is the inclusion of the "inconsequential" category; however, this column also represents an area for future research as there is no evidence of this type of category being used in assessment rubrics. Further research is needed to assess the efficacy of this category in permitting a reasonable number of omissions per plan. It is important for planners to discuss and denote which components will be critical to include in a given strategic plan.

According to the rubric, only a few of these specific components are absolutely required in creating a strategic plan. The rubric does not allow for an "inconsequential" assessment for the core strategies and goal/objectives components. These particular components seem essential to a strategic plan and imperative for guiding organizational change. Rubric users should be aware that "core strategies" and "goals/objectives" might be identified in a given plan with those terms or with any number of other terms. Similar descriptors include: priorities, initiatives, strategies, goals, or objectives.

Regardless of the specific term used, it is important that these components are included in the plan to focus efforts through a continuous and dynamic process of self-analysis (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence,

1997). The rubric promotes "action research" that links internal, self-evaluation to daily practice. Researchers indicate this type of learning behavior is essential to overcoming the traditional gap between evaluation and practice (Gordon, 2002). In fact, when self-assessment is used formatively – when it continually re-informs the process and updates the vision – summative evaluation is often unnecessary (Barnetson, 2001). Using valid self-assessment techniques prompts learners – be they individuals or institutions – to make conscious, intentional choices that align with and reinforce their overall vision for the future, and that thus enhance their sense of purpose and identity.

REFERENCES

Adams, D. (1991). Planning models and paradigms. In R. V. Carlson & G. Awkerman (Eds.), *Educational planning: Concepts, strategies, practices* (pp. 5-20). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Allen, M. J. (2006). *Assessing general education programs***. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing.**

Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (2005). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley.

Alexander, I., & Robertson, S. (n.d.). Understanding project sociology by modeling stakeholders. Retrieved on December 1, 2007 from http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~iany/consultancy / stakeholders_without_tears/stakeholders_without_tears.htm and www.scenarioplus. uk/ stakeholders/onion_diagram.ppt)

Barnetson, B. (2001). Performance indicators and chaos theory. In M. Cutright (Ed.), *Chaos theory and higher education: Leadership, planning, and policy* (pp.145-158). Baltimore: Peter Lang.

Bloom B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives, Handbook I: The cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay.

The Center for Applied Management Practice. (n.d.) *Using the HUD logic model: An accountability tool for grants management, planning, reporting, evaluation and performance measurement*. Presentation and handout at the *Grant writing and more: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development workshop* in Richmond, VA. October 15-18, 2007.

Chaffee, E. E. (1985). Three models of strategy. *Academy of Management Review, 10*(1), 89-98.

Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*. (2nd ed.). San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Clayton, P., & Ash, S. (2005). Reflection as a key component in faculty development. *On the Horizon 13*(3), 161-169.

Cutright, M. (2001). Introduction: Metaphor, chaos theory, and this book. In M. Cutright (Ed.), *Chaos theory and higher education: Leadership, planning, and policy* (1-11). Baltimore: Peter Lang.

Davis, A. (October 15-18, 2007). *Grant writing and more: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development workshop*. Richmond, VA.

Driscoll, A., & Wood, S. (2007). *Developing outcomes-based assessment for learner-centered education: A faculty introduction*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Ehrenberg, R. G. (2002). *Tuition rising: Why college costs so much*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gordon, G. (2002). Learning from quality assessment. In S. Ketteridge, S. Marshall, & H. Fry, (Eds.), *The effective academic: A handbook for enhanced academic practice* (pp. 201-217). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Holcomb, E. L. (2001). *Asking the right questions* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hunt, C. M., Oosting, K. W., Stevens, R., Loudon, D., & Migliore, R. H. (1997). *Strategic planning for private higher education*. New York: Hathaway Press.

Jackson, N., & Ward, R. (2004, August). A fresh perspective on progress files - A way of representing complex learning and achievement in higher education. *Assessment and evaluation in higher education, 29*(4), 423-449. Retrieved September 18, 2007, from PyschINFO database.

Kaufman, R., & Grise, P. (1995). *Auditing your educational strategic plan: making a good thing better*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Kennie, T. (2002). Strategic and operational planning. In S. Ketteridge, S. Marshall, & H. Fry, (Eds.), *The effective academic: A handbook for enhanced academic practice* (pp.72-89). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Kunstler, B. (2005). The hothouse effect: A model for change in higher education. *On the Horizon, 13*(3), 173-181.

Leslie, D. W., & Fretwell, E. K. (1996). *Wise moves in hard times: Creating and managing resilient colleges and universities*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

NetMBA (2002-2007). *CPM – Critical Path Method*. Retrieved on December 1, 2007 from http://www. netmba.com/operations/project/cpm/

NetMBA (2002-2007). *PERT*. Retrieved on December 1, 2007 from http://www. NetMBA.com/ operations/project/pert/

Polhemus, L., Swan, K., Danchak, M., & Assis, A. (Fall 2005). A method for describing learner interaction with content. *Journal of the Research Center for Educational Technology*. Retrieved on December 1, 2007 from http://www.rcetj.org/?type=art&id=3523&

Presley, J. B., & Leslie, D. W. (1999). Understanding strategy: An assessment of theory and practice. In Smart, J. C., & Tierney, W. G. (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (14), 201-239. Bronx, NY: Agathon Press.

Rapoport, A. (1999). On the cultural responsiveness of architecture. In Stein, J. M., & Sprecklemeyer, K. F. (Eds.), *Classic readings in architecture* (pp. 329-338). New York: WCB/McGraw-Hill.

Rowley, D. J., Lujan, H. D., & Dolence, M. G. (1997). *Strategic change in colleges and universities: Planning to survive and prosper*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rowley, D. J., Lujan, H. D., & Dolence, M. G. (1998). *Strategic choices for the academy: How demand for lifelong learning will re-create higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rowley, D. J., & Sherman, H. (2001). *From strategy to change: Implementing the plan in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shahjahan, R. A. (2005). Spirituality in the academy: reclaiming from the margins and evoking a transformative way of knowing the world. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18(6)*, 685-711.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (October 4, 2007). *Types of logic models*. Retrieved October 21, 2007 from http://www.researchutilization.org/logicmodel/types.html

Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2005*). Introduction to rubrics: An assessment tool to save grading time, convey effective feedback, and promote student learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Stone, M. M., & Brush, C. G. (1996). Planning in ambiguous contexts: The dilemma of meeting needs for commitment and demands for legitimacy. *Strategic Management Journal,* 17, 633-652.

Swenk, J. P. (2001). Strategic planning and chaos theory: are they compatible? In M. Cutright, (Ed.), *Chaos theory and higher education: Leadership, planning, and policy* (33-56). Baltimore: Peter Lang.

University of Wisconsin . (2005). *Program development and evaluation: Logic model*. Retrieved October 21, 2007 from http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html

W. K. Kellogg Foundation. (January 2004). *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide: Using logic models to bring together planning, evaluation, and action*. Retrieved March 22, 2008 from http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

Wilson, D. (1997). Project monitoring: A newer component of the educational planning process. *Educational Planning, 11*(1), 31-40.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Figure 1: Rubric for Assessing Quality of a University's Strategic Plan

Assessment of the Strategic Plan proposed by (Enter Name of University)	Excellent - Strengthens Plan (Item is clearly and thoroughly addressed and is well coordinated with other components.)	Good - Helps Plan (Item addressed but somewhat under-developed; too many scores at this level will indicate instability of overall plan.)	Poor - Weakens Plan (Inhibits success of overall plan: includes information that is essential but missing, or information that contradict other items.)	Inconsequential to Plan (May be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan, in and of itself. Too many omissions indicate instability.)
INTRODUCTION	Clear and concise statement of rationale for planning is included at beginning of the plan.	Rationale for planning is understated/implied or difficult to locate (i.e. covered in a later section of the plan).	Provides poor rationale for planning or indicates organization's unreadiness for change.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.
*Does plan answer: **Where are they now?***				
ORGANIZATION'S HISTORY and PROFILE	Plan conveys pertinent information about the organization and its history. Text provides clear evidence that organization's history and context have been considered and integrated into plan.	Plan includes some information about the organization and its history, including enough information about the existing organization for reader to understand the plan's context.	Plan fails to recognize history and/or organizational context to the point that omission of this information hinders the reader from understanding aspects of the plan.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Plan contains a well-organized executive summary which, in one or two pages, references the mission and vision and highlights the core strategies of the plan. Readers are briefed on the process and the most important aspects of the plan.	Plan contains an executive summary which, in one or two pages, references the mission and vision and highlights the core strategies of the plan. Key features may not be clearly outlined, but text still prepares reader for the strategies, goals, and objectives to come.	Plan contains a brief executive summary which does not give readers proper insight into the mission, the process, or importance of the plan and hinders reader from understanding aspects of the plan.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.
*Does plan answer: **Where do they want to go?***				
MISSION, VISION, and/or VALUES STATEMENT	Mission statement is clear -- vision and values enhance the overall mission of the organization and statement enthralls readers to explore plan further. Mission and vision are inspirational and expressed in passionate terms.	Mission is clear -- vision and values align with the overall mission of the organization while drawing some interest from readers to explore plan further. Purpose, business, and guiding principles are well articulated.	Mission, vision, and/or values are vague, inconsistent or lacking. Statements create little interest for readers to explore plan further.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.
SUMMARY OF CORE STRATEGIES	Core strategies of the plan are clearly stated and are developed with both depth and breadth. They align with mission and to be appear feasible.	Core strategies of the plan are adequately developed and align with mission. Feasibility may be questionable based on information presented in the plan.	Core strategies of the plan are poorly developed, inadequately explained, and/or unrealistic.	Not applicable -- omission of this core planning component cannot be inconsequential.
*Does plan answer: **How will they get there?***				

Does plan answer: **How will they get there?**

GOALS/OBJECTIVES	Specific goals/objectives are presented with enough depth and breadth to provide direction and ensure feasibility. There is evidence that consideration has been given to financial, administrative, and governance mechanisms in developing goals/objectives. A convincing plan for achieving action is described (i.e. there is reasonable indication of who, what, when, where and how the strategies will be addressed).	Specific goals/objectives are presented with some depth and breadth. Some consideration has been given to financial, administrative and governance mechanisms in developing goals/objectives. A fair plan for achieving action is provided (i.e. there is some indication of who, what, where and how the strategies will be addressed).	Specific goals/objectives are not included or are presented with inadequate depth and breadth. Little or no consideration has been given to financial, administrative and governance mechanisms in developing goals/objectives AND/OR a weak plan for achieving action is provided (i.e. there is no plan for determining who, what, when, where and how the strategies will be addressed).	Not applicable -- omission of this core planning component cannot be inconsequential.
SUPPORT	Plan ensures feasibility by delineating specific goals/objectives regarding finance, administration, and governance to enhance progress during implementation.	Plan enhances feasibility by delineating some goals/objectives regarding finance, administration, and governance.	Conflicting or missing information regarding finance, administration, and/or governance is evident that will likely hinder coordination and implementation of the plan.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.

Does plan answer: **How will they know they are getting there?**

STRATEGY FOR EVALUATING OUTCOMES	Plan indicates mechanisms, schedule, and/or key performance indicators for assessing progress during multiple stages of the implementation and institutionalization process.	Plan provides some information regarding mechanisms, schedule, or key performance indicators for assessing progress in the future.	No plans are evident for checking progress.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.

Does plan answer: **How can they keep it going?**

STRATEGY FOR REFINING PLAN	A feasible plan is outlined regarding who will implement plan; monitor and confirm progress; refine inadequate aspects; and institutionalize the plan.	Good information is provided regarding who will implement plan; monitor and confirm progress; refine inadequate aspects; and institutionalize the plan.	No information is provided regarding who will implement plan; monitor and confirm progress; refine inadequate aspects; and institutionalize the plan.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.

Does plan provide necessary supporting documents?

APPENDICES	Appendices are well organized and allow reader to easily locate supplemental information that assists in understanding and/or implementing the plan.	Appendices are fairly well organized and allow reader to locate supplemental information.	Appendices are of poor quality or are missing where needed. Supplemental information is inadequate to support understanding and/or implementation of the plan.	Item may be missing or greatly underdeveloped without severe detriment to plan.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT	An excellent plan provides a comprehensive vision that addresses most content areas in an strong way. It contains few if any areas that are inconsequential or weak.	A good plan addresses most content areas at the level of good or excellent and contains only a few areas that are inconsequential or weak.	A weak plan fails to adequately address several pertinent content areas (i.e. when more than a few areas of the plan are weak and/or many are omitted, the overall plan has weak chances for success). An inconsequential plan actually constitutes a weak plan, by using an organization's planning resources without return on investment.	Not applicable -- an inconsequential plan constitutes a poor plan.

Sequence of questions in boldface was adapted from Holcomb (2001). Specific criteria were developed using Allison and Kaye (2005) and Holcomb.