

An Organizing Framework for Strategic Planning Discussions

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Any Plan Requires “Buckets” to Organize Your Ideas

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A Simple Framework

Themes



- Domain of activity
- What are the 3-5 areas that you want to prioritize above all others?
- Requires decisions about which themes are subsumed by others (e.g. are career outcomes subordinate to student success or are they parallel)
- Themes implicitly communicate your values

Goals

Actions

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- Intended outcomes
- For each theme, where does your current performance stand and where is this plan designed to take it?
- Each theme must have one or more quantitative performance metrics
- For each metric you must agree on realistic, achievable but bold goals
- There are risks involved in publicly committing to highly precise goals (e.g. we will grow undergraduate non-resident headcount to X). You may instead want to publicize higher level but still quantitative goals (e.g. maintain stable enrollment in a declining market)

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- Steps required to achieve the goals
- What will you do differently to improve performance?
- Action must be aligned with the goals—that means you need to understand why you are not currently reaching the goals and have a theory about which actions are likely to success
- Note that some actions may support more than one goal (e.g. improved pedagogy might support enrollment, student success, and career outcomes)
- Ideally you would have 3-5 “strategies” each with supporting actions

Examples



Theme	Enrollment	Student Success	DEI
Goal	Stabilize enrollment at current levels	Increase six-year graduation rate to X	Eliminate achievement gaps between demographic groups
Actions	Grow adult/ online enrollment Improve transfer process Grow market share among resident HS applicants	Improve first year retention rate Address financial barriers to retention Re-engage stop outs	Expand bridge programs Redesign gateway courses Improve campus climate



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