



# The Human Side of the Strategic Planning Process in Higher Education

by Robert P. Delprino



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Society for College and University Planning

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## ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PLANNING (SCUP)

The Society for College and University Planning is a community of higher education planning professionals that provides its members with the knowledge and resources to establish and achieve institutional planning goals within the context of best practices and emerging trends. For more information, visit [www.scup.org](http://www.scup.org).

## WHAT IS INTEGRATED PLANNING?

Integrated planning is the linking of vision, priorities, people, and the physical institution in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making and action. It shapes and guides the entire organization as it evolves over time and within its community.

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## FOREWORD

Several years ago, I attended a preconference workshop at a SCUP conference. The presenter asked attendees to name the one college course they found most helpful as they engaged in their work as planners. Overwhelmingly, the attendees named courses in the social sciences such as psychology, sociology or even, as in my case, cultural anthropology. There were also those who noted business courses in leadership or organizational development that provided the understanding most necessary to conduct planning. I believe those who engage in planning in higher education rapidly come to the conclusion that, as Robert Delprino says, “at the end of the day it is still all about the people.”

While the essence of planning rests on the people who develop and implement a plan, institutions successful in their planning know it is also all about the process. Managing a planning process for organizations as varied and complex as even the smallest of post-secondary institutions is a daunting prospect. How does the planner keep the process focused, structured, and on track when there are so many competing priorities and perspectives?

The Quality Improvement (CQI) movement of the 1980s and ‘90s is no longer the ubiquitous management practice it once was, except for businesses and industries covered by ISO standards. However, the CQI movement produced a number of process tools that can be used to structure and assess any process. These tools, if understood and used properly, are powerful in any planning process and can assist the planner in managing both the process and the people included in it. They provide methods for identifying challenges and goals, providing balanced opportunities for participation, and even for keeping a large-scale process on track. Using these tools can also improve group interaction and foster the type of team attitude that promotes acceptance and buy-in from participants. But process management tools require context to be useful, and that context can only come from a deep understanding of the institution and its people.

In *The Human Side of the Strategic Planning Process in Higher Education*, Delprino offers an overview of post-secondary institutions as organizational systems and then provides a review of some of the major theories regarding the characteristics and relationships of the various moving parts in that system. The use of the systems approach to analyzing institutions and their functions is a particularly apt way of framing the use of process management tools, since these tools were developed to be used in systems analysis.

As planners, we are always looking for that innovative method of breaking through resistance, better identifying a goal, or engaging stakeholders more effectively. Delprino’s thoughtful research and analysis will add to the knowledge base that is critical to successful planning.

—Karen E. Hinton, July 2013

## PREFACE

Strategic planning in higher education has the potential of transforming institutions as well as those who work in them and are served by them. However the ability of the strategic planning process to achieve long lasting change that transforms the institution and its members in a meaningful way is not consistently realized. Despite having an appreciation of the institution's past, present, and potential future as well as following all of the appropriate steps to develop a plan, some planners may be left wondering why the process did not work as smoothly as hoped.

Part of the answer lies in the human side of strategic planning. The development of the planning document may be the easier part of the process. Getting institutional members to buy in and understanding how the strategic plan is related to their personal success as well as the institution's success is a challenge. For many members of the institution, strategic planning is something that just takes place around them rather than by and through them. A premise of this book is that most things that happen in an organization, both good and bad, occur by and through its members. As part of the execution of a strategic plan, it is the members of the institution, their capacity to think and act strategically, who have the potential to give life to the strategic plan and make it a living document.

The focus of this book is on the human side of the strategic planning process. There are many tools and resources available that offer guidance as how to develop a strategic plan in institutions of higher education. A number of these resources devote some attention to the issues related to the constituencies involved in the process. However material that is devoted entirely to the topic is lacking. This book makes people, the human side, its focus and attempts to bridge the gap in the discussion. The book is not meant to be a comprehensive review of all of the issues. It is meant to provide the reader with some insight to appreciate the importance of people and how to best bring others into the process.

Given some of the unique characteristics of higher education institutions and the forces influencing them, this book discusses the players in the process and the challenges of working with them. Successful strategic planning in higher education is not only about who you bring to the table but also about how you get them there. Therefore a sample of tools is presented that are intended to engage institutional members and provide them with an opportunity to have their ideas and views heard. The way the human side of the institution is engaged is vital to achieving any level of success for a strategic plan and an outcome that is meaningful and results in enduring change.

—Robert Delprino, 2013

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I would like to thank the instructors and participants of the SCUP Planning Institute with whom I have had the pleasure of working over the past several years. The interactions have allowed me to assess the application of exercises, ideas and concepts, as well as to clarify some of my thinking on strategic planning. Work such as this is never the result of just one person but takes the unique skills of many to make it a reality. A special thank you to Mr. Terry Calhoun, Ms. Claire Turcotte, Ms. Kimberly Mass and Ms. Shaunna Cahill for sharing their skills and for guiding me through this process. They have made this work both personally and professionally enjoyable.

And finally, but not least, I thank the three people in my life who have changed me for the better and inspire me by all they do, Allyson, Andrew and Maureen.

## Chapter 1: Change is a People Process

“only when an organization exists in stable circumstances, when its operations resemble clockwork, unvarying in their practices, can individuals be taken for granted or ignored without peril.”

—Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1983), *The Change Masters*, page 17

Very few, if any, organizations operate with anything remotely resembling clockwork precision. As for stability, many organizations need to regularly adapt new practices just to maintain their status quo. Higher education institutions, perhaps more than other organizations, need to consistently practice adaptability to remain competitive and relevant. The idea that the higher education environment is more competitive is not new (Richardson, Nwankwo, and Richardson 1995). There are, however, many emerging factors that influence the current ability of higher education institutions to maintain their existing standards and thrive. Such pressures include shrinking enrollments, rising costs, demographic changes, online competition, accreditation burdens, and shrinking funding opportunities (Hughes and White 2006). A sound strategic planning process can allow higher education institutions to successfully maneuver through the evolving educational landscape.

Dooris, Kelley, and Trainer (2004) credit the beginning of strategic planning in higher education to campus facility and space planners, with one of the first formal meetings of campus planners taking place in 1959 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. These authors identify a developing theme in strategic planning: a move from an emphasis on the development of a strategic plan to a focus on the implementation of a strategic planning process. Strategic planning is not just about the development of a plan. It is about bringing change to the institution through its members' ability and willingness to carrying out the planning process.

The evolution of strategic planning from a focus on the plan to a greater emphasis on the process is similar to developments that have occurred in other processes in organizations that seek to enhance their members' performance. Most of us as employees have at some point undergone a work performance appraisal. The use of performance appraisal in the US workforce dates back to the early 1900s (Vinchur and Koppes 2011). Performance appraisal is an important process carried out by organizations that can be useful for fostering employee development as well as for making personnel decisions. Much of the early research on performance appraisal in the field of industrial/organizational psychology focused on the measurement process. Great attention was given to the development of the scales used to measure performance. During what can be referred to as the search for a better mousetrap to more accurately measure performance, the context in which performance appraisal takes place was not considered. However, newer approaches to performance appraisal focus on the importance of employee reaction as well as the motivation of the rater to be accurate (DeNisi and Sonesh 2011). Murphy and Cleveland (1995) view performance appraisal as a social and communications process, not just as a measurement tool. The rater is not a passive participant but rather an active agent pursuing specific goals. In this way performance appraisal instruments are part of the performance management process that links individual performance with organizational strategic goals (Aguinis 2008).

Similarly, in higher education strategic planning, a sound strategic plan, while important, is just one part of the larger planning process. Faculty, staff, and student perception of, reaction to, and participation in the process will

determine the success or failure of any planned strategic change. When it comes to change, either at an individual or organizational level, the development of the strategy or plan may be the easiest part of the change process.

There are many resources that can guide an individual or organization in the development of a strategic plan document. Similarly, if you want to make some lifestyle change such as to your diet or exercise, it's easy to find a resource to help. There are countless experts who would like you to purchase their diet product, piece of exercise equipment, or video or to attend a seminar that will change you and allow you to reach your goals. You may notice in the proverbial fine print that the majority of these life-changing strategies typically include a statement that "results presented are not typical." Besides protecting themselves from possible liability for claims of success that may not be achieved, there is a very good reason for that statement. While any plan for change takes thoughtful work and effort, a key factor that determines its success is the individual. This is also true in organizations. A premise of this book is that most things that take place in organizations happen by and through people. The flip side is that most things that get screwed up in organizations also happen by and through people. This premise applies to strategic planning in higher education.

Ideally, higher education institutions are learning organizations. Learning organizations can be described as organizations that facilitate the learning of their members and promote the continuous transformation of the organization (Garvin 1993). I am always amazed that in institutions of higher education, which are all about the education of others, the structures or processes that run the institution do not always support or allow for the internal transformation that is required for successful planning and change. Where institutions may fall short is in the management of the people side of the planning and change process. Part of this shortfall may be the inability or unwillingness to acknowledge that the people side of the strategic planning process can be handled with greater efficiency and effectiveness. In higher education, a student's performance is consistently critiqued and evaluated, resulting sometimes in a failing grade. It may be rarer to hear of higher education institutions freely admitting to their own failures or shortfalls.

While the mission and vision are important elements in a successful strategic planning process, it is also about how people fit into the process itself. An architect designing a new building that will fit into the existing campus footprint or redesigning an existing space to maximize usability must consider factors such as cost and technology and make sure that the construction is followed according to the design. However, it is the students, faculty, and staff who have to live with that design. They will be the ones who will use that building and space and give life to those architectural plans and visions. To leave the user out of the design plan would be a mistake. In many ways the same is true of the strategic planning process. It is the members of the institution who make the strategic plan real and bring it to life.

Unfortunately, in higher education there is sometimes a greater focus on the plan without similar appropriate consideration given to the human side of the strategic planning process. Neglecting the human side of the process can lead to the failure of the entire process. Lessons can be learned about the importance of managing the human side of organizational processes from the literature on managing the human side of mergers and acquisitions in business (Buono and Bowditch 1989). Mirvis and Marks (1992) coined the term "merger syndrome" to describe the negative consequences of the uncertainty and fear employees may experience when companies participate in a merger or acquisition. Often employees are more concerned about their positions and future with the company than they are about the success of the process. As Buono and Bowditch (1989) note, many mergers and acquisitions fail to meet



strategic or financial expectations due to poor handling of the human side of the process. Often a company's desire to merge with or acquire another company is based in part on the human capital that the targeted company possesses. While much attention is given to the legal and financial aspects of a merger or acquisition, failure to communicate the change process appropriately and to address the human side of the process can result in the loss of the human assets and talent that made the company an attractive acquisition in the first place. People, the talent, leave due to fear and uncertainty. A successful change process tells those involved what their roles are, provides direction, and explains the potential risks.

Strategic planning does not need to be an activity of trial and tribulation. Considering upfront the organizational factors that can influence the strategic planning process can provide a perspective for better managing the process so that it does not become an ordeal. Also, there is value in studying other organizational processes for tactics that can be easily adapted and applied to the strategic planning process. For example, in decision making, some changes can be made relatively easily. A successful decision results in part from an understanding of how it can best be made given some fundamental characteristics of the decision process. For instance, changing faculty office hours can be a simple process as long as students and the powers that be are notified. Changing class location, reserving space on campus, or allocating space for a department office can be considered relatively simple decisions. These decisions are programmed and automatic, with common policies and guidelines that exist for making them. A second set of decisions, those that are non-programmed, are more complex and may pose greater risk. Such decisions include where to make budget cuts to address a significant budget gap, how to deal with campus housing issues related to an unexpected influx of students, or when to change the mission and focus of the campus. In these types of decisions, how to proceed is not as clear. More specifically, programmed and non-programmed decisions differ on three dimensions: (1) type of task: simple task vs. complex task, (2) available guidance: reliance on organizational policies vs. no clear or historical precedent, and (3) type of decision maker: lower level vs. upper level supervisor. Other factors that can influence the success of a decision-making approach include the time in which the decision must be made, the level of commitment required from others, and whether the decision needs to be made by an individual or a group (Buhler 2001; Dinur 2011; Greenberg 2011).

There are many approaches and models that can be used to explain the decision-making process, such as the analytical model, the rational economic model, and the bounded rational model to name a few. However, regardless of the model, having insight into the process from the individual or group perspective is important in identifying the correct approach and attaining success.

This is also true for strategic planning. Considering the strategic planning process from the perspective of the individuals and groups that form the institution is vital for a positive outcome. Successful strategic planning requires gaining buy-in from others and addressing opposition to change. To those of you reading this who are seasoned managers, I would expect at this point that some of you may be saying to yourselves that this is all common sense. Maybe so, but as is often the case, those ideas we take as common sense are overlooked or not adequately considered.

A quote from Howard Ikemoto, a second-generation Japanese American artist born in Sacramento, California in 1930, may better make this point: "When my daughter was about seven years old, she asked me one day what I did at work. I told her I worked at the college—that my job was to teach people how to draw. She stared at me, incredulous, and said, 'You mean they forgot?'" (Masters 2004, ¶ 1). In strategic planning so much focus can be placed on the development

of the plan and the wordsmithing of the mission and vision statements that the obvious—managing the people factor, guiding institutional members through the process, and dealing with their fears and concerns—can be forgotten.

The importance of people in an organizational change process as well as the potential for mismanagement of people in the change process is not new. Jaffe and Scott (1998) discuss the belief companies may have that their members will welcome change and new ways of working. However, these authors go on to explain that members' responses to change could actually be similar to those of people who have been exposed to a traumatic, disastrous change. For some people, change is deeply disruptive; some will get worse before they get better, some will never buy into the change, and some will resort to stereotyped, rigid, unproductive behavior. There is a belief that little assistance or patience is needed from the organization because all members will fall in line and contribute to the change. This may be the view that some leaders in higher education have of how faculty, staff, and students will react to the introduction of a strategic plan.

Even those members who embrace the strategic planning process still need to be guided through the process. Rosen (1998) describes the everyday work of the leader as human interaction. While Rosen views people as an organization's most valuable resource, the nerve center of the organizational body, he also compares people to high-maintenance divas and racehorses that demand constant attention. In the higher education strategic planning process, the faculty, staff, and students are the nerve center of the campus. It is their work and success that contribute to the reputation of the institution. They are also the foundation of any change. How they are managed and led will determine the ultimate value of the strategic planning process.

I had the opportunity early in my career to conduct a job analysis of the firefighters in a moderately sized metropolitan city. The goal was to examine the tasks and functions of firefighters as they responded to calls. I spent four days living in what was described as one of the most historic as well as busiest stations in the city. While I did fulfill a childhood fantasy of learning how to slide down a fire pole, in four days there was not a single fire call. Either out of boredom or the need to show me something, I was introduced to and had demonstrated for me every possible piece of firefighting equipment the department had at its disposal. It was an impressive display. Afterward a retired fire captain who regularly visited the firehouse summed it up for me. He said, "Over the many years I served as a firefighter, I have seen and used a great deal of equipment and am still impressed by the new technology. But at the end of the day it is still all about bringing the water to the fire." In strategic planning, at the end of the day it is still all about the people. When it comes to strategic planning, an overemphasis can be placed on getting the plan, the mission, and the vision worded just right or on identifying the appropriate analytics to measure success. These are all greatly important and can be very impressive and useful. However, the bottom line is that beneficial strategic planning, the kind that will bring about sustainable change, is about the people involved in the process. The best strategic plan is meaningless if the intended participants do not buy into the process, contribute to its development in a meaningful way, or accept the integration of the plan into their daily work lives.

## ARE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS?

In their classic work *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, Katz and Kahn (1966) view the patterns of human behavior as the essence of an organization. It may be in these patterns of human behavior that higher education organizations differ from other organizations. Generally, organizations have been defined as stable and predictable structured social systems of people working individually and in groups to attain common objectives (Champoux 2011; Greenberg 2011; Tosi, Rizzo, and Carroll 1986). Things might be much simpler when it comes to the strategic planning process if those social systems were consistently stable and predictable. The reality is that human behavior in organizations is complex and not always easily understood. However, a conceptual framework of organizations can provide a foundation for a discussion of characteristics to consider in managing the people side of the strategic planning process in higher education.

There are some commonalities among all organizations as to how they can be conceptualized, but, as with individual personality, each has unique idiosyncrasies that define it and provide some insight into how the organization and its members may respond to internal and external pressures. Like individual personality, which is commonly viewed as stable over time, an institution of higher education's personality, culture, or way of doing business may not be easily altered, thereby affecting the ability of members to respond to change or nimbly adapt to the introduction of a strategic plan.

There are some ways in which higher education institutions may differ from other organizations that can influence the success of the strategic planning process. These include organizational/power structure, terms of employment, faculty and staff allegiances, and the constituency served.

Organizational structure refers to the formal configuration of individuals and groups within an organization so as to identify responsibilities and authority (Moorhead and Griffin 1998). The structure of an organization will take different forms based on decisions made regarding the desired span of control of employees or the organizational division of labor, among others. It is the structure of the organization that allows it to successfully implement a strategic plan (Chandler 1962; Hall and Saias 1980). Typically, the power structure of an organization is relatively clear. An organizational chart clarifies who is in charge and defines decision-making and personnel responsibilities. An organizational chart of a college will clarify who is the president, who are the top administrators and academic deans, and so on. However, in higher education there are a number of influential entities that may not make the power structure as clear as it may seem on paper. For example, many campuses have faculty senates that serve as governing bodies in such matters as reorganization related to the development of new colleges and departments and changes to academic programs or policies. A faculty senate may not have official power in the institution to bring about change; however, the official powers on campus would not want to deal with a vote of no confidence from their faculty senate over concerns of shared governance. Even if such a vote is only symbolic, it can result in paralysis in a campus community and a strategic planning process. Other entities such as student government groups can also have significant power on campus. In addition to being responsible for expressing students' opinions and concerns, on some campuses they manage significant funds collected from student activity fees.

Another differentiating characteristic of higher education is the amount of time employees are employed with the institution. Most students entering the workforce do not have the expectation of earlier generations that they will

spend their entire career with one organization. In fact, campus career development centers often advise students to expect to have several careers in their lifetime. While there is some debate as to the number of career changes an individual will make (Bialik 2010), it may be more common for someone to change jobs within a single occupation several times. The average person born in the latter years of the baby boom, 1957–1964, held 11.3 jobs from age 18 to age 46, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics longitudinal survey begun in 1979 to track younger baby boomers over a considerable segment of their lives (US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012).

Beyond higher education, you may be hard pressed to identify many other organizations where employees spend their entire working career at one place or with so many well-attended 25-years-of-employment celebrations held each year. The job security that comes with tenure (for faculty) or continuing appointments after a one-year probation period (for staff) may not inspire organizational members to the ideals of strategic planning.

Related to term of employment is allegiance in higher education. Most faculty members have responsibility for scholarship, teaching, and service on campus and in the community. In some cases, faculty may act as independent contractors focused on obtaining their next research grant or completing a manuscript that will further their career at the expense of class lectures or campus service. In academia, often fame and fortune are what is rewarded. Faculty who spend significant time focused on students may not be rewarded professionally on campus or in their field of study. Despite this, some faculty choose to place a strong focus on teaching and appreciate the academic freedom they have to teach and mentor their students. However, those faculty may be more focused on their role as an educator or mentor than on the long-term strategic aspirations of the institution. I have had the opportunity to facilitate a number of workshops on strategic planning for faculty and staff on college campuses. At one campus, the staff member responsible for directing the college through a strategic planning process hoped the workshop would enlighten the campus on the benefits of strategic planning. At the end of the day, the staff member was anxious to get feedback from the group as to their excitement about beginning the strategic planning process. One faculty member who spent the day politely listening to the presentation said to the staff member, “I appreciate the work you are doing, so you focus on strategic planning and I need to focus on my classes and students.” Such a statement may indicate that for some, strategic planning is something that happens around them, but not necessarily by or through them. For others the strategic plan may not be on their radar or part of the reality of their day-to-day job. Such views by faculty and staff do not contribute to making a strategic plan a living document.

Finally, higher education institutions differ from other organizations in the constituency they serve, their students. While faculty and staff may spend much of their careers in one place, the student body is continuously changing either through graduation or attrition. This continuous turnover in student stakeholders may create a cultural disincentive for change. Why bother with a change process when those for whom it is in part intended will not be there in four to six years?

### **FORCES INFLUENCING HIGHER EDUCATION**

The factors described above are some of the challenges educational leaders contend with in the development and implementation of strategic plans. They are representative of a few of the unique internal forces working on institutions of higher education that can contribute to the creation of a culture that is less than enthusiastic about the strategic planning process. Beyond these internal forces, higher education is being transformed by new challenges

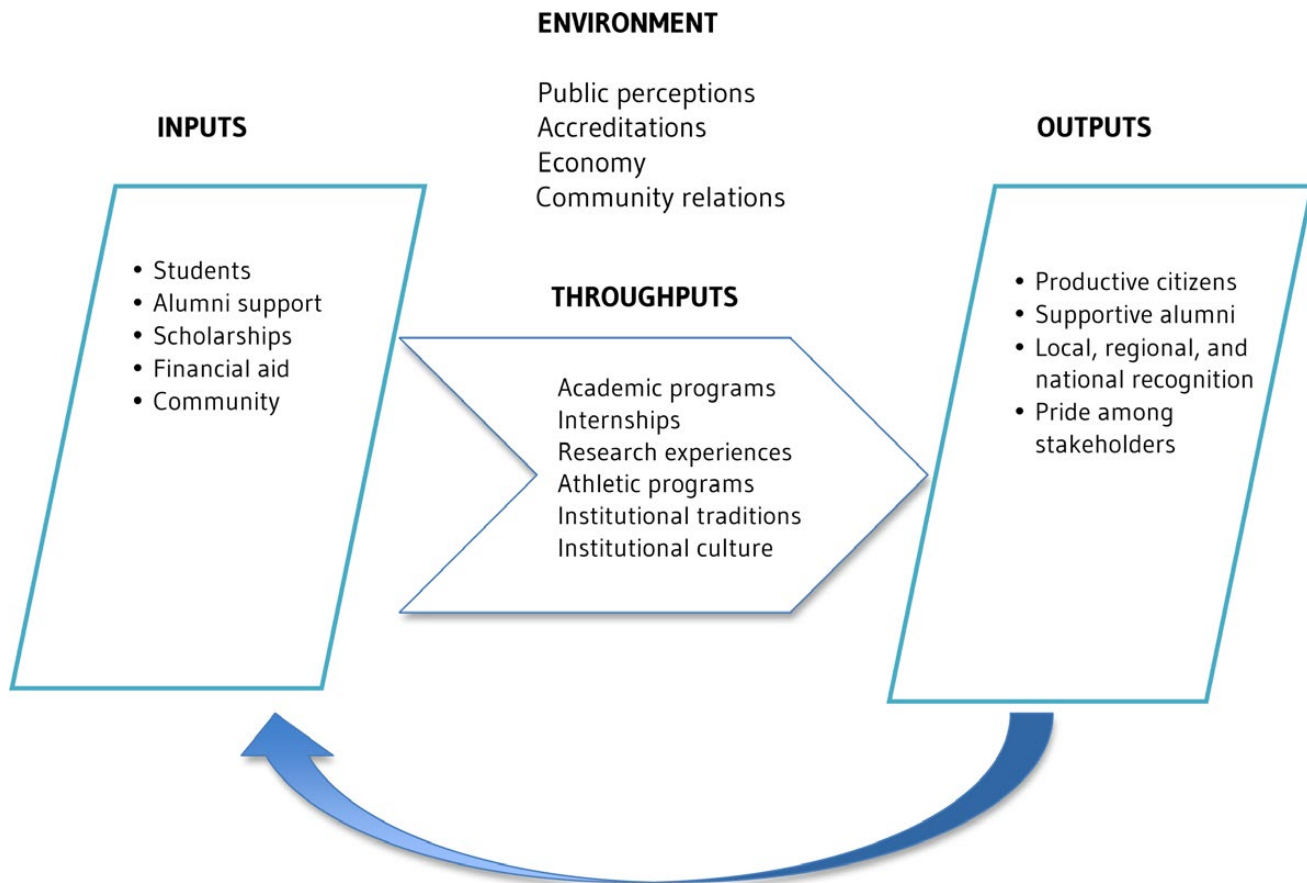
and opportunities coming from outside the institution, such as the changing cultural and academic demographics of entering students and the pressure to develop and deliver courses and programs through new media. Obviously, the strategic planning process in higher education must consider both the internal and external forces working on the institution to be successful.

The ability of an organization and its members to respond to internal and external pressures with adroitness is a necessary evolution of all organizations. This may be even truer in education, which has been perceived in the past as more stable and better insulated from external influences than other sectors. In 1966, Katz and Kahn referred to educational institutions as people-processing and people-changing organizations that are less open to the immediate influence of the marketplace and more concerned with long-range outcomes. The authors went on to suggest that people-changing organizations such as schools should be guided by gentler, more individually oriented norms in contrast to the norms that guide economic-based organizations (Katz and Kahn 1966). What a difference 50 years make. While it is at least hoped by educational institutions and those working in education that in both the short and long term they are helping to mold and change the lives of their students, you may be hard pressed to imagine any institution of higher education that does not consider its position in the marketplace and the economic realities of the current environment. Therefore, it is useful to examine some of these external and internal driving forces to better understand the challenges faced by those who try to bring about change in and planning to the institution.

A useful framework, one that recognizes both the importance of the environmental factors higher education institutions must contend with and the human response, is the open-system approach. From an open-system perspective, organizations are dynamic and continuously changing in response to internal and external pressures. Katz and Kahn (1966) were among the first to apply this perspective to the study of organizations. In an open-system perspective, organizations are not static but rather in a constant self-sustaining process where inputs are transformed into outcomes that are used by others or reused by the system. The behavior of the organization and its members can be understood in terms of their interaction with the environment. Figure 1.1 offers an example of how such a model may apply to higher education.

A benefit of viewing the institution as an open system is that this perspective can help to explain how organizational structures and job-role requirements can hinder or advance members' ability and willingness to promote a strategic planning process. For example, a college that is part of a larger university system may have its financial support determined in part by the number of students enrolled at the college. A plan to achieve a high enrollment number through an open enrollment policy may lead to admitting students with lower academic ability and conflict with a plan to raise the overall standard of students and the public perception of the institution. In terms of job-role requirements, an employee working at a computer help desk may be required to respond only to questions related to logging in and e-mail despite having knowledge beyond these two areas. A strict job role limiting what the employee can offer may be in conflict with stated plans to enhance customer service and may instill in the employee a reluctance to act on the strategic goal of enhanced customer service.

Figure 1.1 Educational Institution as an Open System



Morgan (2006) makes the point that we should always organize with the environment in mind and suggests that interest in corporate strategy is a result of the realization that organizations must be sensitive to what is occurring beyond their walls. The open-system approach allows for a greater appreciation of the interrelatedness of the environmental and internal forces working on the institution and suggests how to strategically align these forces. A college's or university's interactions with customers (students), staff, faculty, unions, competitors, vendors, and regulatory groups (to name a few) have important implications. In higher education strategic planning, it may be common to view these different groups as separate unrelated entities and to attend to the planning issues related to each group separately. Thinking about strategic planning from a silo perspective may have the advantage of making the process more manageable. However, in reality, all of the many planning processes that take place in higher education affect each other. The academic plans, building and facility plans, financial plans, human resources plans, etc., are all interrelated; at least they should be viewed that way. It can be very difficult to mentally juggle all of these groups and separate planning processes at one time. An open-system perspective provides a way to visualize and perhaps better manage the interconnections among all of the planning that takes place on a campus. However, for an institution to benefit from an open-system view in its strategic planning process, it must proactively scan the environment for changes, respond to those changes, and position itself to manage those changes.

Table 1.1 lists some of the potential external and internal driving forces that are relevant to higher education. External and internal driving forces differ in terms of their degree and the influence of control. While external driving forces

are centered on factors outside the institution, internal forces may represent unique characteristics of the institution. Also, while a higher education institution may be able to influence to some degree the external driving forces that affect it, there is a more favorable probability that the college or university can control and modify its internal driving forces.

These driving forces simultaneously represent both challenges and opportunities in the strategic planning process, depending on how they are managed and how the energy around them is harnessed. An analogy can be made to sailing. The square sail is the oldest type of sail, with its use dating back to 3500 BC. While a very useful way to harness the wind, a downside of the square sail is that with it all forces are working in the same direction. Because square sails are pushed by the wind, the ability to sail in different directions is limited. A lateen sail (sometimes referred to as a triangular sail) can convert wind power from any direction into forward thrust (Campbell 1995; Casson 1971), which takes away some of the uncertainty by sailors about their ability to get from point A to point B. Like the wind, the forces working on an institution are going to be there, pushing it along. The value of considering driving forces as they apply in an open-system perspective is that such consideration can help identify an approach to determine whether the driving forces will hinder the planning process or can be harnessed to move the institution in the desired strategic direction in a timely manner.

The list of driving forces in table 1.1 will have specific meaning for each institution. The following are offered as suggestions of what those forces may look like for some.

Table 1.1 **External and Internal Driving Forces Related to Higher Education**

External Driving Forces	Internal Driving Forces
1. Influence of a Larger System	1. Student Characteristics
2. Technology	2. Faculty and Staff Characteristics
3. Educational Reform	3. Organizational Leadership
4. Competition	4. Infrastructure
5. Location	5. Process and Logistics
6. Image	6. Sense of Community
7. Economy	

## EXTERNAL DRIVING FORCES

### 1. INFLUENCE OF A LARGER SYSTEM

Some colleges and universities are part of a larger system (such as a state system) or are extensions of a campus (such as in the case of a college with a presence overseas or a community college with several campuses within a region). Being what can be viewed as a subsidiary of a main campus may limit an institution's ability to adapt and respond quickly to external forces. For example, a college campus that is part of a larger state educational system typically cannot introduce a new program of study to respond to interest in a popular area without first gaining approval from the overseeing administration. In some systems, that process can take years. A smaller independent college may be able to respond to market demand more quickly. Some systems may mandate a consolidation of resources among

their campuses across a region or state, requiring those campuses to modify their purchasing or resource allocation procedures and thus limiting their ability to purchase computer equipment or acquire library books and research databases.

## 2. TECHNOLOGY

For the majority of us, especially those of us in higher education, keeping up with the rate of technological change is vital. To say that technology is constantly changing is a platitude. Futurists such as Ray Kurzweil (Bloom 2007) have predicted that organizations will have to redefine themselves at faster rates due to the explosive power of exponential technological growth. Others such as Jaron Lanier (2011) believe that what is most important about technological change is how it changes people. The rate or impact of technological change may not be a concern from a student's perspective. Rather, students simply expect that all of their devices and technology will work on campus. Can you imagine if the campus was in a dead zone for cell phone use or if students had to register for classes in person rather than online? On some campuses students receive a text message when their laundry in an automatic washer or dryer is ready. Campuses are pushed to keep up with the latest technology in part by student expectations that this technology will be available to meet their needs.

## 3. EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Budget cuts and calls for affordable education and reliable outcome measures have renewed discussion of educational reform. Part of this discussion has focused on the training of teachers to enhance student outcomes (Darling-Hammond 2010; Rust 2010). Changes in state certification or licensure requirements for teachers and other professionals by external regulatory groups may require educational programs to make changes in their course curricula. Also, teacher training programs must respond to proposed federal agendas that would review and assess the quality of such programs with a focus on accountability and the collection of meaningful data. The outcome of such a review may influence access to federal funds for teacher preparation (US Department of Education 2011).

## 4. COMPETITION

All institutions would like to have a competitive edge. Challenges to achieving this edge include rising costs and a proliferation of programs, including online degree programs and programs offered by the for-profit sector. The New York metropolitan area is home to more than 240 private colleges and universities employing about 97,000 workers and attracting students and faculty from around the globe (Harcum 2009). Some colleges, such as the Humane Society University (HSU), are identifying unique niches in the marketplace. HSU's College of Arts & Sciences is the first higher education institution in the country to confer bachelor's of science and master's of science degrees in animal policy and advocacy and humane leadership. A 2011 survey of online learning reveals that the number of students taking at least one online course has surpassed six million; in other words, nearly one-third of all higher education students are taking at least one online course (Allen and Seaman 2011).

## 5. LOCATION

Higher education institutions typically cannot easily relocate their campus to respond to changing trends or reports of changes in potential applicant pools. It is anticipated that colleges in the northeast will face a grim future given declining state appropriations, unstable endowment returns, and a projected drop in the number of high school graduates (Bidwell 2013). From 2009 to 2028, the number of graduates in the region is expected to decline by 10



percent, meaning that 65,000 fewer students will be enrolling in higher education institutions. Of course, a great location can contribute to the success of a business. Proximity to competitors and potential customers will drive the success of any institution. Decision makers can capitalize on the physical location of their campus by marketing the benefits of a metropolitan or rural campus to potential students. Having a campus near an international border can allow a college to market to another set of potential applicants who otherwise may have limited opportunities because of a lack of certain programs or greater competition for enrollment in their country of origin. Opportunities for employment in certain professions can attract potential students who may find it easier to obtain a certification or licensure for a career they plan to pursue in the country in which they earn their degree. Another strategic reality to consider is how technology will minimize the importance of an institution's physical location. Visionaries such as Bill Gates suggest that technology will make place-based higher education less important (Young 2010). For higher education, the importance of location may refer more to its presence on the Internet.

## 6. IMAGE

Why is a college's image so important? The image of an institution is the mental picture that first comes to mind when the institution is mentioned. It is related to how others view the reputation of the college or university both nationally and locally. Some institutions have gained a national reputation based on the success of their sports teams, and in some cases they may be better known for their athletic programs than for their academic programs. Athletic programs can bring a great deal to a campus in terms of recognition, monetary rewards, and a sense of connection for students and alumni. Public image can influence student applications, alumni donations, research grants, and community partnerships. Some colleges go to great lengths to protect their image. One does not have to look too hard in the media to have a sense of how one action by a student, faculty member, or administrator can tarnish the public image of a school that is otherwise outstanding.

## 7. ECONOMY

Economic realities will influence many of these external driving forces. For example, a challenging economic environment may make a public college or a community college a more affordable option for potential students and their families. As a result, a public institution may see an increase in applications and enrollment, which may place stress on student services or conflict with its mission of accessibility to a quality education. Also, economic challenges may put more pressure on an institution to consolidate resources. For example, as a cost-saving measure a state system may attempt to consolidate campuses or eliminate redundant levels of administration at a number of campuses.

## INTERNAL DRIVING FORCES

### 1. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), between 2000 and 2010, undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 37 percent, from 13.2 to 18.1 million students. Projections indicate that undergraduate enrollment will continue to increase, reaching 20.6 million students in 2021. An earlier report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) identified some of the most significant changes of the past 40 years in American higher education. Changes included the proportional growth of enrollees who are female, who are students of color, who attend full time, and who attend four-year institutions. The annual Mindset List first created at Beloit College in 1998 by Ron Nief and Tom McBride reflects the worldview of entering first-year college students

(Beloit College 2012). The list reminds us of the cultural factors that have gone into shaping the lives of students and how they see the world. As an educator, you may have found yourself needing to modify cultural references used as part of your class lectures for younger students. In addition to demographic and cultural changes, it is important to consider the changing academic characteristics of students. A 2012 ACT study reports that approximately 28 percent of all ACT-tested high school graduates did not meet any of the ACT readiness benchmarks for English, reading, math, and science (ACT 2012). The report notes that 60 percent of students tested missed the mark in at least two of the four subjects and that three out of four high school graduates were not fully prepared for college and would likely need to take at least one remedial class. This may have important consequences in terms of the allocation of resources needed to provide remedial courses. Also, consideration may need to be given to the admissions process so as to better select qualified students and meet projected student enrollment requirements.

## 2. FACULTY AND STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

Higher education is at a point where many of the faculty and staff of the baby boomer generation are preparing for retirement or would like to be. For some, the economy is delaying retirement as they try to recoup some of their retirement savings lost over the past few years. Where a mandatory retirement age is not in place, institutions may decide not to deal with possible law suits or clash with local unions to replenish their faculty and staff with new, younger employees. However, at some point the replacement of faculty and staff must be confronted, particularly given the projection that an estimated 6,000 administrative jobs in postsecondary education will need to be filled before 2014 (Leubsdorf 2006). A growing trend is to hire non-tenure-track faculty. It has been reported that in 1960, 75 percent of college instructors were full-time tenured or tenure-track professors; as of 2009, only 27 percent were (Stainburn 2009). The gap has been filled with graduate students or adjunct and contingent faculty. The employment of part-time adjunct faculty does provide a cost-saving benefit, but it can also erode a foundation of faculty who are connected to the institution. As part-time faculty may have to teach on several campuses to support themselves, their commitment to any one college through serving on campus committees, assisting students with research, or participating in extracurricular activities will be lacking.

## 3. ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Leaders are key to how an organization functions. According to Siddique et al. (2011), academic leaders should motivate, inspire, direct, and lead faculty members toward the achievement of shared objectives. Current academic leaders need to carry out these activities in more complex environments than those faced by their predecessors. Amey (2010) contends that current postsecondary leaders need to deeply reflect upon organizational culture and values in order to guide their institutions into the future.

An added challenge is the many stakeholders who must be addressed and managed, including students, faculty members, staff, community members, alumni, and political representatives. Each group may require different skills and tactics to successfully address its concerns and effectively use it to meet the institution's objectives. In applying the concept of leadership to college deans, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) define academic leadership to include building community, setting direction, and empowering others. The many stakeholder groups need to feel connected to the institution. Members of the stakeholder groups need to be given direction as to how they should perform their responsibilities. And, academic leaders need to empower others to do their required tasks so they can reach given objectives. In a higher education environment, at times achieving these three objectives may seem equivalent to herding squirrels.

#### 4. INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure refers to the basic facilities and services needed to allow a higher education institution to function, including technology, buildings, academic support systems, and research facilities. In many ways, infrastructure can determine an institution's success. Infrastructure needs to be in place to support innovation and to establish access so that innovation can work smoothly (Smith 2012). It can connect institutional members and provide them with the tools and services needed to facilitate teaching, learning, and research in a cost-effective manner. At one time, infrastructure focused on the condition of campus buildings and student housing (Pipho 1990). More recently, greater attention has been paid to technology infrastructure that supports not only campus computers and the increasing bandwidth that facilitates electronic communications, digital scholarship, and collaboration (all formerly done on paper), but also digital mobile devices such as iPods, personal digital assistants (PDAs), tablet PCs, and advanced cell phones. These devices are being more commonly used by students to access course-related materials (Galuszka 2005). There is an expectation that an infrastructure that supports student learning in this way will be available. Higher education institutions cannot use technology only to enhance traditional classroom teaching; doing so just adds cost to the system. Instead, institutions need to use technology to transform the way teaching is designed and delivered (Bates and Sangrà 2011). In terms of planning, just putting in the technology is not a guarantee that it will be used. Consideration also must be given to managing and servicing such technology. The initial capital investment will affect future operating expenditures; however, usually the operating cost of managing and servicing the technology infrastructure will be greater than the initial capital investment cost (Bates 2000).

#### 5. PROCESS AND LOGISTICS

Process and logistics refers to how things get done on campus. In education, logistics can include how students register for classes, how space is allocated for faculty offices, how programs are offered, or how faculty and students are evaluated on competencies. The process and logistics for making decisions or accomplishing tasks may create hurdles for students and faculty in achieving success. Hooker (1997) refers to stakeholders in higher education as being caught in a paradigm paralysis. The paralysis is related to the ability to change thinking and behavior. Hooker acknowledges that educational systems have not changed to keep up with the exponential growth in knowledge. The paradigm paralysis may exist because of administrative structures that are inherited rather than changed or altered to address changes in the environment. Organizational models of how things are done in higher education will need to change to meet the new realities. Some institutions are moving toward systemness (Zimpher 2012). Systemness refers to the coordination of multiple components to create a network of activity that is more powerful than any action of an individual part on its own. A multi-campus system would need to rethink how many of its operating procedures and practices are conducted to achieve consistently attainable and actionable goals across all campuses.

#### 6. SENSE OF COMMUNITY

A community is a vision of shared purpose. It provides shared commitment, relationships, and responsibility. It is a concept that is central to colleges and universities (Bogue 2002). A learning environment that fosters interaction and social learning is an essential feature of the higher education experience. There is value in college and university campuses increasing the sense of belonging in students, faculty, and staff. Building community on campus allows institutional members to grow in their identification with the institution, make valuable connections, and cooperatively work toward learning. Ernest Boyer, a champion of collegiate community, warns that a lack of commitment to serious learning among students can sap the vitality of the undergraduate experience (Carnegie

Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 1990). Developing community can be a challenge on a campus that consists mainly of students who commute. Clark (2006) identifies one challenge faced by urban commuter students: the perception of needing to renegotiate college all over again each term. Clark reports that commuter students may lack a common ongoing experience that may be more typically found on a residential campus. Therefore, sustaining classroom-based friendships from one semester to the next may be a challenge, and the result may be a community of students and faculty who do not feel connected to each other or the institution. Consideration also needs to be given to how the growth of distance learning influences a sense of community. Such courses provide convenience and flexibility for students and administrators in terms of scheduling and access. However, Drouin and Vartanian (2010) report that online students conveyed lower levels of connectedness and an overall lower desire for a sense of community. Finally, sense of community can also refer to the institution's relationship to the community surrounding the campus. Institutions and their leaders need to consider how to create successful community-campus partnerships that capitalize on each other's assets (Seifer 2000).

The nature and degree of the external and internal forces presented will vary for each institution. Their effect on the larger strategic planning process needs to be carefully considered, especially in relation to the players and stakeholders the strategic plan is meant to influence. Some of the forces may not seem to be directly related; however, each has the potential to cause a ripple effect that can influence the other forces and the overall planning process.