Society for College and University Planning
SCUP Fellow Research Project Final Report

Association Between
Accreditation & Integrated Planning

Sue Gerber, PhD
SCUP Fellow 2019–2020

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ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PLANNING (SCUP)

At SCUP, we believe that by uniting higher education leaders, we can meet the rapid pace of change and competition, advancing each institution as it shapes and defines its future. Through connection, learning, and expanded conversation, we help create integrated planning solutions that will unleash the promise and potential of higher education.

Our community includes colleges and universities (two-year, four-year, liberal arts, doctoral-granting research institutions, public, private, for-profit, and private sector). Individuals we serve include planning leaders with institution-wide responsibilities, such as presidents, provosts, and other senior roles, to those who are in the trenches, such as chairs, directors, and managers.

WHAT IS INTEGRATED PLANNING?

Integrated planning is a sustainable approach to planning that builds relationships, aligns the organization, and emphasizes preparedness for change.

The Society for College and University Planning

Table of Contents

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MEET SUE GERBER

Sue Gerber, PhD, is associate vice president of Institutional Effectiveness at New Jersey City University. In that role, she oversees accreditation, assessment, strategic planning implementation, institutional research, and policy renewal process on campus. She works closely with the president and her senior advisors to enhance alignment of these processes in service of the institution's educational mission and in its context as a Hispanic Serving Institution enrolling primarily first-generation students.

WHAT PROMPTED YOUR CHOICE OF RESEARCH TOPIC?

The germ of the idea for my project came at a SCUP conference. I noticed that the sessions I attended on integrated planning emphasized an ethos—a way of being—over practical or concrete activities. The reverse seemed to be the case for sessions focused on accreditation. In part because New Jersey City University (NJCU) was preparing its Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) self-study at the time, I became intrigued by the ways that accreditation could facilitate a shift toward more integrated planning. The SCUP Fellow Research Project allowed me to explore this idea, learn from the perspectives of accreditation vice presidents and institutional accreditation liaison officers, and hopefully contribute something to the field.

THE PROJECT

This project explores the relationship between integrated planning and accreditation requirements. It is a case study that focuses on one accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and was conducted with the Commission's assistance. This research examines the perspectives of both the Commission and its member institutions. The key questions addressed in this project included:

- What are the Commission's expectations for member institutions around integrated planning?

- How are member institutions engaged in planning? What do they perceive as MSCHE's role?

- How are perceptions and actions around planning consistent with SCUP's culture of integrated planning definition and the maturity model?

- What role can institutions, MSCHE, and SCUP play in furthering development of an integrated planning culture on campuses?

It is anticipated that the results of this research can be used by member institutions, MSCHE, and SCUP.

SCUP MODEL OF INTEGRATED PLANNING

The SCUP model of integrated planning serves as the analytical framework for this project. Emphasis was placed on the definition, the components of an integrated planning culture, and the integrated planning maturity model. The detailed framework is included in the appendix. Key elements relevant to this project are summarized below.

SCUP defines integrated planning as: a sustainable approach to planning that builds relationships, aligns the organization, and emphasizes preparedness for change. This definition highlights the four components (of the 12) of an integrated-planning culture that are considered most vital: sustainability, relationships, alignment, and preparedness for change. The integrated planning maturity model (following) presents stages of development—from chaotic to optimized—for each of the four components.

Stage One Chaotic	Stage Two Reactive		Stage Three Proactive	Stage Four Optimized
Unaware: The institution doesn't plan or stakeholders are unaware of (or apathetic about) planning.	**Tactical:** There is evidence of planning, but it is mostly tactical in nature. Institution tries to be "all things to all people."	Sustainability Planning is durable.	**Operational:** Planning is important, but it mostly focuses on the current state of operations. Strategy may exist, but it struggles to gain traction.	**Strategic:** The institution is secure in its identity and direction. Planning is a journey. Focused choices lead to a thriving institution.
Distrust: Institutional stakeholders are disconnected. Distrust is fostered through poor communication, rumor, or a culture of cynicism.	**Silos:** Bonds exist, but they are mostly defined by the unit in which one resides. Silos combat the finding of common ground.	Relationships Planning is collaborative.	**Trust seeds:** The institution recognizes the power of relationships and community, but may struggle to capitalize on them.	**Trust:** Planning is open, participatory, and ongoing. Relationships are strong, and the change conversation is sustained.
Ad hoc: Any planning that takes place is uncoordinated, poorly communicated, and rarely reinforced. Resource allocation is random and the institution is unaware of external threats.	**Firefighting:** A lack of coordination and communication results in frustration and duplication of effort. The institution is unaligned to the external environment.	Alignment Planning is designed.	**Coordinated:** There is a value for alignment, but it is mostly vertical. There is evidence of processes to coordinate planning, but it is mostly driven by the annual budget cycle.	**Integrated:** Alignment is practical, organizational, and cultural. The institution prepares for change in an integrative fashion. Resource allocation is open and transparent.
Unprepared and incapable: The institution lacks direction, knowledge, skill, and time to embark on planning. The institution cannot navigate change.	**Short-term thinking:** Planning may be present, but it lacks strategic focus and is defined or driven by immediate concerns. Change is slow.	Preparedness for change Planning is indispensable.	**Emergent readiness:** The institution has many elements in place for change initiatives, but may struggle with capacity, capability, or unforeseen external threats.	**Agile and ready:** The institution balances a clear view of the long-view with an ability to navigate change in the short run. Institution optimizes change opportunities.

Reproduced with permission from SCUP: *Planning Workshop Resources* utilized at the SCUP Planning Institute.

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) served as the object of analysis for this case study. To provide context for the analyses of interviews and artifacts, this section briefly summarizes the MSCHE accreditation cycle and describes aspects of the Standards for Accreditation that contain references to planning.

The MSCHE accreditation cycle includes: self-study, annual institutional updates (AIUs), and a mid-point peer review (MPPR). It is an eight-year cycle, with the self-study occurring at the beginning of a cycle and the MPPR occurring mid-way through. The AIU is comprised primarily of IPEDS-reported data on student outcomes and financial health. Optionally, institutions can provide contextual information to support interpretation of the IPEDS data. If applicable, institutions use the AIU to describe progress on recommendations made by the Commission. The MPPR consists of a review of five years of AIUs to discern trends. The MPPR evaluators report on whether there is any concern regarding the trends, and, if necessary, suggest recommendations.

The MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (Standards) were revised in 2014. The goals of the revision included emphasizing the centrality of mission, ensuring a sustained focus on the student-learning experience, and emphasizing continuous improvement. The revision also sought to develop a cohesive framework for institutions; the final document includes seven standards:

- Standard I: Mission and Goals

- Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

- Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student-Learning Experience

- Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

- Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Standard VI is commonly considered "the planning standard." The holistic statement of the standard is:

> The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Standard VI is comprised of nine individual criteria, focusing on:

- Institutional objectives that are linked to mission and goals, reflect assessment findings, and are used for planning and resource allocation

- Planning processes that are communicated and assessed

- Financial planning/budgeting that is aligned with goals and mission, and are linked to strategic plans

- Fiscal resources, human resources, physical infrastructure, and technological infrastructure that are able to support operations adequately

- Well-defined decision-making with clear responsibilities and accountabilities

- Planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology that is linked to strategic and financial planning

- Financial viability confirmed by an independent audit

- Strategies to assess resource utilization to support mission and goals

- Assessment of effectiveness of planning, resources, and institutional improvement

In terms of the SCUP culture of integrated-planning model, the holistic statement makes explicit reference to *alignment* and implicit reference to *preparedness for change* in its characterization of responding effectively to opportunities and challenges. *Sustainability* and *relationships* are not referenced. Four of the individual criteria reference alignment directly or indirectly, including alignment of mission/goals, objectives, assessment, resources, and planning.

In addition to references in Standard VI, planning is referenced in three of the remaining standards:

- Standard I references mission and goals guiding planning decisions

- Standard V indicates that planning is one of the potential uses for results of educational effectiveness assessment

- Standard VII asserts that while an institution's governing board has ultimate accountability for planning, planning is among the responsibilities of the CEO

Only one of the four components of integrated planning—alignment—is referenced in any other standards:

- Standard I references alignment of mission and goals with decisions around resource allocation, curriculum, educational outcomes, and institutional outcomes

- Standard III references alignment of development opportunities with faculty need

- Standard VII refers to alignment of administrators' competencies with the needs of their responsibilities

In summary, in the MSCHE Standards, planning is largely referenced in Standard VI, with an emphasis on the alignment component of the SCUP culture of integrated-planning model. This information can provide context for interpretation of interviews and self-study artifacts.

INTERVIEWS AND ANALYSES

Three data sources were used for analysis: interviews with MSCHE vice presidents (VPs), interviews with institutional accreditation liaison officers (ALOs), and institutional self-study documents. The interviews served to bring life to the MSCHE Standards and provide perspective on the intention behind them (VPs) and the manner in which institutions experience them (ALOs). The interviews were also used to understand potential ways to enhance the link between accreditation and planning. Information from interviews was supplemented with data from self-studies, which represent the major artifact of a self-study process.

Three MSCHE VPs were interviewed, and topics of discussion included:

- How integrated planning is represented in the accreditation process in general and in the Standards specifically

- MSCHE expectations for evidence related to integrated planning and how institutions approach providing evidence in their self-study documents

- Opportunities for institutional improvement around integrated planning and the role of accreditors in institutional development

Seven ALOs were interviewed, all of whom were involved in some way with planning at their institutions. Characteristics of the institutions of these ALOs are summarized below:

- Four were at private institutions and three were at public institutions

- One was at a two-year institution, and six were at four-year institutions

- Five institutions completed self-study in 2018 or 2019; two were in preparation for 2021
  - All five of the institutions with recently completed self-studies were reaffirmed. Two required follow-up related to assessment.

- Two of the seven institutions earned commendations for the quality of their most recent self-study

The topics of the ALO interviews included:

- How planning happens at their institutions

- The nature of self-study preparations related to planning and, if applicable, outcomes of the evaluation visit and Commission action

- Perspectives on how integrated planning is represented in the accreditation process in general and in the Standards in particular

- Perspectives on the SCUP definition of integrated planning, including how well the main elements characterize integrated planning and what (if anything) was missing

Nineteen self-studies were reviewed for this project, the majority of which were publicly available on institutional websites. Characteristics include:

- The self-study evaluation visits were conducted from 2018–2020

- Nine were from private institutions and 10 from public institutions

- Five were from two-year institutions and 14 from four-year institutions

- All used a standards-based approach

- Commission actions on these self-studies included:

    - Three institutions were placed on warning, related completely or in part to Standard VI.

    - Six institutions were reaffirmed with follow-up, four of which were related to Standard VI.

    - Two institutions were reaffirmed with commendation for the quality of their self-study.

Analysis of the self-studies included coding the documents for:

- Descriptions of planning processes

- References to components of the SCUP integrated-planning culture, with an emphasis on sustainability, relationships, alignment, and preparedness for change

- Descriptions of committees, plans, policies, and processes

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section describes the findings of interviews and self-study analyses, which were organized around three areas:

- MSCHE and institutional perspectives on how planning is represented in the Standards

- Institutional perspectives on how accreditation is integrated into the rhythm of planning on campuses

- Institutional perspectives on the SCUP definition of integrated planning, and indications of lived experience regarding the SCUP planning maturity model.

Each section opens with a description of findings and closes with a discussion of implications.

PERSPECTIVES ON PLANNING AND THE STANDARDS

When discussing integrated planning, MSCHE VPs spoke about the centrality of planning to both an institution and the Standards. From an institutional perspective, planning is "the whole ball" because planning is the way institutions meet their mission. Further, to meet mission, institutions "need good governance, good administrators, good faculty, good curriculum, and good resources." Planning is also key to compliance of all types—HEOA, ADA, IRB, the Family and Medical Leave Act, etc. Institutions plan for compliance by examining risk tolerance through the lens of mission and goals.

As such, planning is "pretty much everything…it's all baked in" in the Standards. That is, although explicit references to planning outside of Standard VI (Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement) are limited, there are numerous indirect references. The Commission deliberately built in redundancy such as including references to assessment, mission, and continuous improvement in each standard in part to "send a message that planning really needs to be something that goes across a campus." As a consequence, one VP asserted that individuals working on Standard VI during a self-study are in some ways expected to take the lead on the process. The Standard VI working group will inevitably meet with all other working groups, and is often in charge of ensuring alignment around assessment and the strategic approach. In sum, with planning both at institutions and in the Standards, it is "truly that the whole is more than the sum of the parts."

Conversely, ALOs had a more compartmentalized view of how planning was represented. All ALOs indicated that planning was in "the planning standard"— Standard VI. One ALO also mentioned Standard I as being linked to planning, and one mentioned the importance of assessment. However, none of the ALOs shared the perspective that planning was integrated throughout the standards, or that it was reflected in areas such as curriculum, faculty, governance, student support, policies, etc. That is not to say that ALOs did not see the role of planning in, for

example, curriculum. But, when thinking of it from the perspective of accreditation, planning was largely confined to Standard VI. This segmented view was also represented in the 19 self-studies reviewed for this project. Only three of the self-studies substantively referenced planning around standards other than Standard I or Standard VI.

Summary and Implications

This discrepancy between the Commission (VPs) and institutions (ALOs and self-studies) could be due in part to the limited references to planning per se in the Standards. Regardless of the reason, the disconnect has impacts on multiple levels. The most immediate level concerns follow-up accreditation requirements. One VP noted that the Commission had seen an increase recently in follow-up actions that involve planning, and that this was due largely to institutions not linking planning across all aspects of institutional processes. Supporting this, six of the 19 self-studies reviewed had follow-up requirements related to Standard VI, three of which involved being placed on warning. In addition, none of the three institutions that reported on planning in an integrated manner was in the group needing follow-up; indeed, two received commendations for the quality of their reports.

Of course, the need for follow-up is indicative of a deficiency within an institution. As one VP summarized, there is a question as to whether institutions "truly understand what integrated planning means." And, because of the centrality of planning to an institution, a deficiency in planning has broad implications for an institution. Further, because today's environment for higher education is challenging on many fronts—financial constraints both before and as a result of the pandemic, changing demographics, changing perceptions of the ROI of academic credentials, and changing needs and preferences of learners, just to name a few[1]— the benefit of integrated planning cannot be overstated.

This circumstance indicates that institutions could benefit from development around integrated planning in general and the intentions of the Commission in particular. One VP noted that the Commission has not always fully unpacked or shared what it expects from institutions around planning, so there is an opportunity for MSCHE to assist institutions. Indeed, the Commission recently began to

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1 See *SCUP Trends for Higher Education* for additional details.

increase its workshop offerings on planning. MSCHE has had success in the past with developing competence around assessment. Both VP and ALO participants noted that due to the vast resources and professional development provided, and the intense and sustained emphasis given to the area, most institutions now understand the process of assessment and the need to establish a culture of assessment on campus.

In some ways, however, developing a culture of integrated planning is more difficult than fostering one of assessment. First, there is an inherent complexity to integrated planning that does not lend itself to instruction through the typical linear workshop approach. This observation is supported by recent SCUP research that found that the complexity of integrated planning was a key challenge cited by higher education leaders.[2] Further, as one VP noted, there are aspects of planning that cannot be easily documented with evidence. For instance, processes are sometimes difficult to document. Plans themselves are easy to document, but the processes involved in planning are not always as straightforward. The VP suggested developing process maps or diagrams to reflect relationships and alignment. Further, part of evidence for reviewers then becomes the stakeholders' ability to add context to and discuss the maps and diagrams in a cohesive and consistent way.

The second challenge is the non-prescriptive stance of the Commission. As VPs noted, MSCHE is very protective about its decision not to tell institutions specifically what to do. After deep discussion, the Commission very deliberately decided "not to go there." ALOs understood the stance, and appreciated the fact that MSCHE gives institutions "a lot of room and space" to demonstrate compliance with the standards and is "open to institutions taking the lead in how they define planning, and how we document it."

However, ALOs also noted that there were distinct disadvantages to this position. One ALO, speaking from the peer evaluator perspective, asserted that because MSCHE "tried to be so non-evaluative, they ended up not being able to send a strong message about how planning works." Further, this the lack of

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2 Moss, M., Young, J., Rogers, S., Baker, D. & Baker, M. (2015). Succeeding at Planning, Results from the 2015 Survey of Higher Ed Leaders. The Society for College and University Planning & Baker Strategy Group.

prescriptiveness carries over in presentations and trainings, which are often weak and sometimes even contradictory. In short, the Commission's stance can prevent evaluators from providing helpful feedback on an institution's planning processes.

This tension is not lost on the MSCHE VPs, and they validate the challenge this presents to institutions. But VPs further observe that it can feel like a no-win situation. Institutions pride themselves on their diversity, the distinctiveness of their missions, and the student experience they provide. Thus, a more prescriptive stance would likely be met with resistance.

These circumstances suggest that it may be useful to consider professional development that is tailored or personalized, rather than one-size fits all. That is, an approach that is situated within an institution's own accreditation experiences could address concerns over prescriptiveness. And an approach that begins with where an institution is on its planning journey could begin to address the nonlinear and complex nature of planning. Insight into how to structure these opportunities may be gleaned from analysis of institutional perspectives on both the relationship between accreditation processes and planning and the components of the SCUP integrated-planning model.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTEGRATION OF ACCREDITATION WITH PLANNING

As noted by the MSCHE VPs, the Standards and the processes surrounding accreditation reflect elements that should be common to all well-run organizations. Further, the goal is for institutions to use accreditation "not as a cudgel, but…as part of their already existing process, and seek for efficiencies and correlations." Similarly, the concept of integrated planning promotes alignment of various processes—including accreditation—into the natural rhythm of institutional life. This section explores institutional perspectives on the extent to which accreditation is integrated into institutional-planning processes. Knowledge of the current state can provide information on how institutions, MSCHE, and SCUP could structure opportunities to foster integrated-planning expertise on campuses.

The ALOs interviewed echoed the Commission's assertion that the Standards represent "best practices in our industry." ALOs routinely used accreditation to reinforce or augment planning practices. For instance, three ALOs discussed leveraging the self-study process to improve their practices. One noted that,

through the work on the self-study, the institution had made substantial advances in formalizing the alignment of resource allocation with its strategic plan. Another ALO developed a tool to document the complex decision-making processes that had already occurred around significant strategic initiatives. Although the exercise was initially for the self-study, the ALO realized the value of continuing to develop such documentation on an ongoing basis, and was working to formalize its use at the institution. A third ALO was using the self-study working groups to develop baseline documentation and establish practices for their newly developed office of planning and assessment.

Other ALOs emphasized using the peer review component of accreditation to support planning. For instance, one ALO was from an institution that was very good at annual planning but had trouble with longer-term planning. The ALO indicated that, while the majority on campus recognized the need for long-term planning, it was an "uphill battle" getting people to be able to "build it into their usual operations." The feedback from the self-study evaluators was precisely what was needed to move from awareness to action, and the institution was in the process of developing longer-term plans. Similarly, one institution had recently refreshed its strategic direction as a result of a leadership change. The self-study was constructed with the new direction as a "red thread throughout" each chapter of the document. In addition to serving to reinforce the direction with the campus community, this approach was also used in order to "get feedback from outsiders about…how the college went about the planning and the academic impulses that grew of that."

Three institutions with longstanding planning practices integrated their accreditation and planning cycles. One shifted its planning cycle slightly and created an aligned strategic-planning and self-study timeline. It then selected the Priority Option for its self-study, with the priorities set forth for the development of the interim strategic plan also serving as the priorities for the self-study. The feedback from MSCHE would then be used to complete a more comprehensive strategic plan. Similarly, one institution utilized its strategic-planning working groups as its self-study working groups. The institution's self-study was framed around key elements of the strategic plan, with standards mapped accordingly. A third institution embedded the work of the self-study development into existing functional groups. This was the institution's way of saying "the things we should be doing all the time—this assessment and this planning—are already going on."

Summary and Implications

Based on the findings, it is clear that these ALOs see the relationship between accreditation and planning and seek to take advantage of it. To varying degrees—from using specific aspects of the accreditation process to push planning to establishing more holistic alignments—ALOs integrated the two. In the majority cases, timing was a key factor. That is, it was the fact that accreditation "was coming" that the linkages were being considered. Even the ALO from the institution that created the fully integrated timeline asserted that if the timing were different, they may have opted for a different approach to their self-study. And the institution that utilized existing functional groups also created a "very large" self-study steering committee "because you have to for Middle States."

This suggests that accreditation gets the attention of institutions. The intention is to develop a culture of planning where accreditation is integrated into an institution's larger planning ethos. However, the focus on accreditation can also open doors to build and strengthen a planning culture for some institutions. As indicated, this approach was successful with assessment. Never was it the intent that institutions assess only for accreditation, but accreditors' sustained insistence was the impetus for many institutions to see the light, so to speak. And just as MSCHE collaborated with industry experts on assessment, the Commission could engage with leading planning organizations such SCUP to assist institutions.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED PLANNING

This section explores institutional perspectives on the four key components of SCUP's integrated-planning model (sustainability, relationships, alignment, and preparedness for change). This information could assist MSCHE and SCUP in structuring opportunities that start from institutions' current state and employ relevant scaffolds. The analyses in this section include:

- ALOs' definitions of the four components and direct references to the components in self-studies

- Underlying themes in the ALOs' discussions that provide further insight into the stages of maturation on the SCUP model

- Indirect references to the components in self-studies that could serve as reference points for institutions on their journeys toward an integrated planning culture

Definitions and Direct Self-Study References

During interviews, ALOs were provided the SCUP definition of integrated planning (a sustainable approach to planning that builds relationships, aligns the organization, and emphasizes preparedness for change) and asked to discuss the key components. When describing *sustainability*, ALOs referred to the degree of stability of strategic-planning processes on their campuses. Five of the ALOs described having long-standing processes, one of which had been in place for 20 years. Although planning was discussed more broadly at other times, with respect specifically to sustainability, ALOs largely confined their comments to the formal strategic-planning cycles at their institutions. Similarly, in the 19 self-studies reviewed, sustainability was represented in the description of the rhythm of strategic-planning cycles and in the extent of community engagement. These discussions were typically included in Standard I and Standard VI, and not often referred to elsewhere in the self-study document.

ALOs defined *relationships* in term of the cooperation and collaboration that were necessary to both develop and implement plans. Two ALOs indicated that their ability to foster cooperation factored into their roles as both ALOs and planners. In the self-studies, this was evident in the descriptions of planning committees, accreditation committees, and working groups.

Alignment was defined by ALOs as coordination, including coordination of activities with mission and coordination of operational plans with strategic plans. In self-studies, alignment was primarily described in the context of ensuring that resources were allocated in accordance with the strategic plan. As with sustainability, these references tended to be isolated to Standard VI. Further, the references were largely descriptive rather than analytical.

ALOs defined *change* in two ways. First, change was seen as the fundamental purpose of planning—planning exists to lay out the path for transformation. Second, it was noted that plans are not static things, and that plans themselves change in light of internal and external factors. Five ALOs discussed this in the

context of choice—with planning providing decision-making tools that help guide actions and resource allocations. Change was as much about saying no as saying yes. This notion of saying no was consistent with what MSCHE VPs had voiced. One of whom suggested that having individuals discuss how the decision to stop something affects them personally is a potential way to help deepen one's understanding of planning.

Change was not extensively represented in the self-studies, except in the sense that institutions were striving to achieve strategic goals. Rather, self-studies tended to emphasize description of the current situation and self-recommendations for the future. Only one of the 19 self-studies reviewed reported on significantly changing direction (in this case, stopping to offer some programs online).

Underlying Themes in Lived Experiences

Although ALOs defined the components succinctly, in discussion, they also referenced underlying elements that included in the SCUP integrated-planning model. For instance, trust and ownership are key to maturation in the relationships element of the model, and were also key in the descriptions by the ALOs. Similarly, increases in transparency, communication, and engagement are consistent with maturation across the stages, and were evident in the ALO interviews.

For instance, ALOs emphasized the inclusive nature of their planning processes, which included campus-wide input and extensive communication at each step. One ALO specifically emphasized the need to "trust the community," elaborating that rigorously top-down planning will fail. With lack of ownership among the campus constituents, there is lack of commitment. Supporting this was the assertion of an ALO who was from an institution that had recently undergone a leadership change. The new president engaged in a year-long and inclusive process that did not change the plan per se but resulted in a one-sentence strategic direction to express a refined approach to the plan. As a result of the president's efforts, the strategic direction was owned collectively by campus constituents.

In addition to development of the plans, trust, communication, and ownership were also key to implementation of these plans. As one ALO put it, in any given day, someone will be asking another office for assistance with something that is out of

their job description. The success of these requests can hinge upon how well the relationship of the task to the mission is communicated, and how strong the feeling of being "in this together" as a campus comes across. Similarly, several ALOs described the need for institutions to be comfortable with and own their setbacks, to be able to work through them as an institution, and to share them in self-studies. The latter point was consistent with the sentiment of the MSCHE VPs, one of whom indicated evaluators want to hear weaknesses and disappointments during an accreditation visit—because there are a source of learning and an authentic part of the planning journey.

Indirect Self-Study References

As noted, the references to the planning elements in the self-study documents were largely descriptive. As such, the more nuanced themes such as trust and ownership were not prevalent. However, self-studies also serve as catalogs of sorts, providing detailed information on committees, policies, processes, and initiatives. And in these descriptions there are indirect references to the sustainability, relationships, and alignment—and an institution's location on the SCUP model.

For instance, a glimpse into an institution's maturity on the sustainability component could be gleaned from references to the extent to which activities are institutionalized versus completed for MSCHE, the extent to which there are standing committees integrated into governance versus ad hoc task forces created to address an unforeseen problem, the degree of disruption to planning caused by changes in leadership, and the nature of communication around planning.

Self-studies also provide information on the nature of relationships at an institution, including in descriptions of committees such as: how and why committees are formed, how membership is determined, and how the work of committees is communicated. Aspects of relationships can also be determined by the extent to which different divisions and departments are represented in each of the standards. For instance, in some of the self-studies, student affairs departments were well-represented in Standard III (Design and Delivery of the Student-Learning Experience). And in some, Standard III referred only to academic affairs. This speaks to the nature and extent of relationships.

Self-studies can also provide some understanding of an institution's level of alignment in various practices. Again, using committees as an example, self-study descriptions can be used to explore the extent to which committees complement versus overlap with one another. A similar examination of plans, policies, business processes, and initiatives could also provide relevant information on alignment.

Summary and Implications

Based on these findings, it is apparent that ALOs define the components of integrated planning in a way that is consistent with the SCUP definition. Further, in describing planning on their campuses, ALOs reference relevant themes such as communication, ownership, transparency, and trust. These are elements that are apparent in many aspects of institutional life, even those not overtly related to planning. These themes could be useful in crafting development opportunities, possibly employing the recommendation from the MSCHE VP about exploring the personal impacts of planning as a way to deepen understanding.

It is also clear in this analysis that the components of integrated planning are directly discussed in self-studies in only a limited way. However, the components are represented indirectly throughout self-study documents. Further, self-studies contain a catalog of information on plans, committees, policies, processes, and initiatives. Descriptions of committees, for instance, can provide insight into alignment and relationships, which in turn can foster discussion around trust and ownership. Because accreditation can be a galvanizing force for an institution, information in self-studies could be used as source material in institutional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study support those of other research that found there to be a need for institutions to enhance their integrated-planning practices. Further, this study suggests that the opportunities could benefit from being tailored to institutional need, including making use of institutions' lived experiences related to planning and accreditation. This section proposes possible actions for institutions, MSCHE, and SCUP.

INSTITUTION-LED OPPORTUNITIES

Institutions can actively work to develop campus-wide integrated-planning expertise, and to integrate accreditation processes into their planning rhythms. Representative actions include:

- Encouraging faculty, staff, and administrators with diverse backgrounds to become MSCHE peer reviewers

- Joining SCUP and utilizing learning resources with campus constituents

- Encouraging faculty, staff, and administrators with diverse backgrounds to attend MSCHE planning workshops and SCUP regional and annual conferences

- Supporting team participation of faculty, staff, and administrators with diverse backgrounds in SCUP Planning Institute

- Encouraging planning-related committees to reflect upon the MSCHE standards, and how their work is relevant to the Standards. Establishing institution-wide mechanisms to document the linkages on an ongoing basis, *regardless of where the institution is in an accreditation cycle*

- Establishing separate or unified standing planning and accreditation committees within faculty governance bodies

- Utilizing the contextual information option in the Annual Institutional Update to provide information on planning

- Engaging in an in-house review of the Annual Institutional Update and Mid-Point Peer Review into the ongoing work of planning and accreditation committees

- Ensuring that at least one of its self-study priorities is related to planning.

- Framing self-study in part as an opportunity to receive peer feedback on planning-related processes and outcomes

MSCHE-LED OPPORTUNITIES

MSCHE can emphasize planning in its accreditation cycle and in professional development opportunities. Representative actions include:

- Increasing planning-related workshops, potentially partnering with leading organizations like SCUP

- Establishing a planning theme in conferences, town halls, and newsletters

- Enhancing peer review training to include focus on planning and its importance to all the standards

- Providing a virtual space for ALOs and Peer Reviewers to meet and share perspectives on planning, within the context of their institutions.

- Continuing to provide institutional examples of elements of self-study documents and expanding access beyond self-study institute

- Providing samples of artifacts contained in evidence inventories, possibly with descriptive annotations by member institutions

- Refining the priorities component of the self-study process by encouraging institutions to select at least one priority that is related to planning

- Enhancing the Annual Institutional Update to include reporting on aspects of planning

- Enhancing the peer review component of accreditation by allowing institutions to request peer feedback on specific topics, which would be addressed separate from the compliance component of a self-study review

SCUP-LED OPPORTUNITIES

SCUP can surface links to accreditation in its planning resources and development opportunities. Representative actions include:

- Encouraging accreditor-led and accreditation-related presentations at its planning conferences

- Explicitly mapping elements of planning workshops to accreditor standards

- Partnering with MSCHE to offer tailored trainings for ALOs, Peer Reviewers, and/or Commissioners

- Establishing coffee-talk around topics such as the ways in which accreditation can be integrated into planning

- Providing resources and tools to assist in documenting planning processes

OPPORTUNITIES FOR A SCUP AND MSCHE PARTNERSHIP

In addition to these primarily self-contained actions, MSCHE and SCUP could combine their expertise to develop an integrated approach to professional development to assist institutions. Focusing specifically on the culture of planning, these customized professional development opportunities could be developed that take into account an institution's accreditation history. That is, institutions would utilize their self-study documents as a framework around which to understand the current state of planning and begin working toward their desired state.

For instance, an institution could use the self-study as a reference point and identify major changes that occurred since submission. This would provide the raw materials for a discussion related to how planning played a part in the changes, successes, challenges, and the like. Similarly, self-studies afford a treasure trove of information on committees. Descriptions of committees (how they were created, how membership was determined, how they interface with one another and other entities, the extent to which they are known on campus, the extent to which they are integrated into governance, etc.) can provide a launching point for the understanding of an institution's planning culture. Other elements common in self-studies that could serve as starting points for discussion include: plans, assessments, initiatives, policies, and communication practices.

Exercises could be developed around these elements and placed online to provide institutions with a menu of professional development resources. They could be packaged into a program offering varying levels of support and collaboration with others. Following is a sample description of a four-level professional development program.

CULTURE OF INTEGRATED PLANNING:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OPTIONS

Program Component	Level 1: Self-Support, Single Institution	Level 2: Asynchronous Support, Single Institution	Level 3: Synchronous Support, Single Institution	Level 4: Synchronous Support, Multiple Institutions
Conduct Discussion Exercise (e.g., Committees)	Self-service menu of exercises, each with resource documents including directions and guiding questions. Recording of discussion is encouraged.	Resource documents and guiding questions are tailored based on preliminary materials provided by the institution. Discussion is recorded.	Discussion moderated by SCUP-certified facilitators (ALOs, Peer Reviewers). Discussion is recorded.	Discussion moderated by SCUP-certified facilitators (ALOs, Peer Reviewers). Discussion is recorded.
Analyze Discussion & Determine Actions(s)	Resource documents with guiding questions to facilitate analysis.	Resource documents and guiding questions are tailored based on review of recorded discussion.	Facilitated discussion, factoring in review of recorded discussion.	Facilitated cross-institutional discussion is conducted among those with like roles (e.g., provosts, ALOs, faculty). Subsequent within-institution facilitated discussion.
Implement	Resource documents with templates for logging actions and reflections.	Resource documents are tailored based on review of action information submitted by institution.	Scheduled check-ins with facilitators.	Scheduled check-ins with facilitators.

Program Component	Level 1: Self-Support, Single Institution	Level 2: Asynchronous Support, Single Institution	Level 3: Synchronous Support, Single Institution	Level 4: Synchronous Support, Multiple Institutions
Conduct Post-Implementation Discussion of Learning	Resource documents with guiding questions to facilitate learning discussion.	Resource documents are tailored based on review of action information submitted by institution.	Facilitated discussion.	Facilitated cross-institutional discussion.
				Subsequent within-institution facilitated discussion.
Continuation	Return to self-service menu and repeat.	Receive recommendation for the next exercise based on review of learning documents.	Facilitated discussion to determine next exercise OR on-site consultation to go deeper into first exercise.	Follow-up within-institution consultation to determine next steps.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this project was to examine the relationship between integrated planning and accreditation, utilizing the MSCHE as the case study accreditor. The intent was to develop recommendations that may be useful for member institutions, MSCHE, and SCUP.

The findings of this research indicate that integrated planning is central to MSCHE's expectations for institutions, and that the depth of these expectations is not consistently clear to or enacted by member institutions. That is, institutions could benefit from further developing integrated-planning competencies.

Analyses also found that accreditation can be a motivating factor for institutions, in part because it is seen to represent best practices in higher education. As such, there is an opportunity for MSCHE to promote professional development among member institutions. This research also suggests that benefit would be derived from professional development that is personalized and tailored to an institution's individual planning journey and consistent with the SCUP culture of integrated-

planning model. Thus, a collaboration between SCUP and MSCHE could be of great benefit to member institutions.

Finally, it may be useful to continue this research to include other accreditors. A broader perspective, including analysis of similarities and differences across accreditors, could provide additional insight.

LAST WORDS

HOW DID YOUR SCUP COACHES SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR PROJECT?

I could not have asked for better coaches than Nicholas Santilli, the senior director of learning strategy at SCUP, and Lynn Priddy, president and CEO at Claremont Lincoln University. Both have wide-ranging experience with institutional planning and extensive involvement with institutional accreditors. They were incredibly giving of their time; equally adept at providing insightful commentary during our conference calls discussing the project in general and when responding to specific aspects of the report drafts. Throughout the process, they plucked me out of many a rabbit hole and moved me back on to an appropriate path to keep the project moving forward. I could not have completed this work without their support and guidance.

SUE'S SCUP COACHES

Lynn Priddy, PhD, serves as the president and CEO for Claremont Lincoln University (CLU), a graduate, non-profit institution focused on socially conscious education targeted to addressing complex equity, economic, social, and environmental challenges. Infused in CLU's degrees and certificates is a distinctive model of leadership and team-based public advocacy based on mindfulness, dialogue, collaboration, and change. Lynn brings 35 years of academic, accreditation, and administrative leadership to her role.

Nicholas R. Santilli, PhD, serves as the senior director for learning strategy for the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP). In this role, he drives the development of learning content for individual practitioners and institutions looking to build the professional competencies of their faculty and staff. He is also the lead for the SCUP Planning Institute, the premier professional development program to create institutional capacity for integrated planning in higher education.

SCUP fellow coaches are volunteers who are experienced in an area of higher education or thought leadership that is aligned with the ultimate goals of the SCUP Fellow Research Project. They bring fresh perspectives and insights over the course of the fellowship year. We thank Sue Gerber's two SCUP coaches for their generosity of time and perspective.

APPENDIX

COMPONENTS OF AN INTEGRATED-PLANNING CULTURE

Build-a-Plan Culture	Component	Integrated Planning Culture
Plans and planning are episodic, ad-hoc, and short term in nature.	Sustainability	Plans and planning are an accepted part of the institutional rhythm. Planning is commonly accepted as indispensable.
The institution does not have plans of varying horizons (immediate, annual, strategic, long-range). If these plans exist, they are not executed, unaligned, or poorly communicated.	Horizons	The institution has plans of varying horizons (immediate, annual, strategic, long-range); these plans are aligned and coordinated.
The planning culture is fragmented or non-existent. There is a lack of (or lack of buy-in for) direction, alignment, and commitment.	Culture	There is a planning culture and it is high-impact; there is a robust embrace of the three cultural components of direction, alignment, and commitment.
There is a damaged or non-existent basis for building a planning culture due to a breakdown in trust, communication, and relationship-building across institutional boundaries.	Relationships	There are strong, ongoing relationships across disparate institutional boundaries. Stakeholders welcome difference.
Conflict is unchecked, undesirable, harmful, and unresolved. There is a lack of awareness that resolution is possible.	Conflict	Conflict is normal, but there are healthy approaches to resolution.
Stakeholders are uncommitted at any level—rationally, emotionally, or through effort—to integrated planning.	Commitment	Stakeholders willingly commit—rationally, emotionally, and through effort—to integrated planning.
The institution is unaligned vertically or horizontally. The institutional vision is disconnected from resource allocation.	Alignment	The institution has healthy processes, open communication, and a "we're in it together" culture. The institution is aligned vertically and horizontally. The institutional vision aligns to resource allocation.
Old power dominates and there is an unawareness or opposition to understanding or embracing new power.	Power	The institution understands, embraces, and can negotiate both old power and new power structures.

Build-a-Plan Culture	Component	Integrated Planning Culture
Decision-making is conventional and there is a lack of a formally recognized and agreed upon process for institutional decision-making. Rule-by-exception is common.	Decision-making	Decision-making is integrative, and there is a formally recognized and agreed-upon process for institutional decision-making. Deliberation and consensus are commonplace.
The institution is not ready for the future. Institutions rate lower on the integrated-planning maturity stages and do not plan across time horizons.	Preparedness for change	The institution prepares for change in an integrative fashion. Institutions rate higher on the integrated-planning maturity stages and plan across time horizons.
The institution lacks direction or the direction is not well understood or communicated. There is little agreement on institutional vision or goals (if they exist).	Direction	There is a cohesive and widely communicated direction. There is widespread understanding and general agreement on institutional vision and goals.
Identifiable and visible leadership is lacking at the executive, senior management, faculty, and staff levels. Integrated planning is not championed.	Leadership	Leadership is interdependent and present at all levels of the institution. There is strong executive leadership that champions integrated planning.

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