

Conceptual Framework for the Delta College Strategic Planning Process

The conceptual framework for the Delta College Strategic Planning Process is based on Appreciative Inquiry, a theory and practice for approaching change from a holistic perspective, and (B) the June 2002 iteration of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) Western Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation Standards.

Appreciative inquiry is based on the premise that human systems are conceived by those who live and work within them. Appreciative Inquiry encourages systems to "move toward the generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core-- their values, visions, achievements, and best practices," (Watkins, Mohr, 2001) Appreciative Inquiry depends upon system-wide collaboration and participation to identify the qualities that exist when the system is performing at its best and to create the best future for that system. In short, Appreciative Inquiry does not use a problem-solving approach that focuses on the deficits of the organization in order to improve it. Instead, Appreciative Inquiry involves the members of the organization in interviewing members at all levels and asking questions that focus them on achievements, assets, potential, strengths, opportunities, insights, and "visions of valued and possible futures" (Cooperrider, 2000). At Delta College these valued and possible futures can inform our strategic as well as our long-range planning.

The June 2002 Accreditation Standards also provide a positive vision and practical framework for our planning process. Like Appreciative Inquiry, the Standards require college-wide participation in a regular self-study process. They focus the College community on the institutional vision and mission, our "valued and possible future," which is centered on promoting and supporting student learning.

Standard 1 describes an effective college as one that "demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally." (Standard 1, 2002)
Standard 1 asserts further that an effective college assesses its effectiveness through a continuous cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and reevaluation.

Standard 2 describes an effective college as one that offers "high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services" that eventuate in the achievement of stated student learning outcomes.

Standard 3 asserts that an effective institution uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources in service of its mission and specifies the need for human resources, physical resources, technology, and financial planning, all of which must be integrated with institutional planning.

Standard 4 recognizes that leadership and governance roles throughout the institution should focus on continuous improvement of the College's effectiveness and support for student learning programs and services. It also acknowledges the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

The Proposed Integrated Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Committee trains to use Appreciative Inquiry to involve the college community in envisioning the future of Delta College. The Strategic Planning Committee and others conduct interviews to involve the College community in the process (Fall, 2003; March 19, 2004). Through involving the College community in analyzing the results of these interviews, the Strategic Planning Committee and others develop a vision statement, new mission statement, strategic intentions and initiatives, and pilot projects to reach them (March 19, 2004; Fall, 2004). The College community affirms and/or revises the vision and mission statements through the governance process. The Strategic Planning Committee organizes the strategic intentions and initiatives with their pilot projects into four strategic goals that will forward the vision and mission of the College for the next three years. The College community affirms the strategic goals through the governance process. The President communicates the strategic goals and sample objectives to the College community including programs, divisions, departments, units (collections of programs), the Board of Trustees, AI provocative propositions groups, and College governance committees.

The Professional Development Center staff and the Dean of Planning, Research, and Regional Education provide training in goal and objective development and filemaker input process to all groups.

Programs and divisions and departments (collections of programs), units (business services, human resources, instructional services, information services, and student services), AI provocative propositions groups, governance committees, and others in the College community develop prioritized goals and objectives and forward them to the appropriate vice-presidential area or to the President. These goals and objectives are informed by the Board goals, the accreditation report and plans, the updated master plan, the enrollment management plan, and they are clearly tied to the mission, vision, and/or strategic goals. All groups translate their goals and objectives and recommendations from program reviews and existing plans into *activities* or *projects* that may or may not require human resources, physical (facilities) resources, technology/equipment/supplies resources over and above their current resources. Next, these groups translate their human resources, physical resources, and technology/equipment/supplies needs into the additional financial resources they need if any. Each major activity is entered as a separate project in the Filemaker Plan and Resource Proposal Form regardless whether additional resources are needed so that progress toward strategic goals, objectives, program review recommendations, and other plans can be tracked.

Plan and Resource Proposal Forms are collated in a variety of ways to produce reports for each of the vice-presidential areas and the President. For example, one report

would show by area all activities/projects that require all three types of additional resources, two of the three types, one of the three types, and no additional resources. Within their units, each vice-presidential area and the President prioritize the activities and projects indicating the required resources. The President's cabinet develops and sends a prioritized list of projects/activities to the appropriate governance committee (Management Reclassification and Entitlement Committee and Classified Reclassification and Entitlement Committee for additional Human Resources funding, Facilities Planning Committee for Facilities Resources funding, and the Campus Information Services Committee for Technology, Equipment, and Supplies funding) for review and recommendation to President's Cabinet. President's Cabinet finalizes priorities and forwards the integrated financial plan to Planning and Budget for review and approval. The integrated financial plan then moves through the governance process (Planning and Budget Committee, President's Council, Board of Trustees) for review and approval.

Annually, activities and projects proposed in goals and objectives, program review recommendations and annual or long-range plans are updated and designated as completed, in progress, or abandoned. Activities and projects that are in progress should reappear in annual goals and objectives with a brief report on their status.