

Strategic Issues, Strategic Goals, and Strategies

For the purposes of our discussions at the Big Meeting, the Planning Team encourages the following definitions of these terms, adapted from a review of the Society for College and University Planning materials and the work of Dr. Roger Kaufman:

Strategic Issue

A strategic issue is an issue that must be resolved if Valencia is to achieve its mission.

We may believe that the issue will be relatively easy to resolve or extremely difficult or even impossible to resolve (or somewhere in between). The degree of difficulty is not the focus. An issue is strategic if it stands between us and achieving our mission. Our mission defines the kinds of things the college will do – the role we will play as defined by the services we will provide and for whom.

Valencia's mission statement is currently under consideration. A copy of proposed revisions to the statement is available at

<http://valenciacc.edu/strategicplan/visionScan.htm>

The version approved in 2000 is part of the Strategic Learning Plan, and may be found at

<http://valenciacc.edu/lci/essays/plan.pdf>

Strategic Goal

A strategic goal names results that we want to change in order to better meet our mission and help resolve strategic issues. A strategic goal addresses results, not the means of achieving the results.

Strategy

A strategy is a means of achieving our mission and the results we name in our goals. Strategies are the ways we will play our role. A strategy is a means to an end, a way to get results.

It is tempting for any institution to focus first on strategies and activities that we believe will get better results, before we decide which results we want to change and why. The selection of strategies and activities is important, but that step comes after we decide what results we want to change.

As the College examines strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats, we will see points where:

- our strengths match our opportunities. In this case, we might base strategies around taking advantage of these points of leverage.
- we have an internal weakness in an areas in which there is significant opportunity. In this case, we might base strategies on changing the internal weakness that acts as a constraint.
- an external threat exists to an area of internal strength. In this case, we might devise strategies to shore up vulnerable areas.

- an external threat exists in an area in which we are weak, presenting a problem. In this case, strategies could include taking on a partner who had the strength that we lack, building our internal strength, or eliminating the area of weakness.

The following examples from several types of institutions may be helpful.

Hospital system example:

Strategic issue – Patients get sick and a percentage die due to infections contracted after entering the hospital, preventing the hospital from carrying out its mission of improving health of patients while doing no harm.

Strategic goal – Reduce significantly the number of patients who contract infections after entering the hospital.

Strategies – Control the spread of disease through new use of state of the art housekeeping procedures. Train and support all staff in practicing disease control steps related to their jobs.

Airline example:

Strategic issue – Unpredictable weather patterns cause unexpected delays in departures, leaving passengers stranded on planes on the tarmac, preventing the airline from meeting its mission of getting passengers to their destinations in a comfortable and timely manner.

Strategic goal – Contain delays on the ground to lengths found to be reasonable to passengers.

Strategies – Improve communications by notifying passengers of delays and the reasons as soon as possible. Reduce the possibility of this occurring by collaborating with airports to board planes only when certain that the departure time falls within the acceptable window.

K-12 Example:

Strategic Issue – Many students come to school hungry, which interferes with their mental alertness and, over time, compromises their physical development and health, preventing the school from achieving its mission of educating them.

Strategic goal – Eliminate hunger as a factor interfering with students' ability to focus on learning each day.

Strategies – Partner with welfare, agricultural and non-profit organizations to provide breakfast prior to the school day's start. Partner with parents of all income levels to ensure understanding of the role breakfast plays in the success of their child.