Strategic Planning and the Community College

Dr. Kevin Pollock - Vice President of Student Services

West Shore Community College
Scottville, Michigan
West Shore Community College

- Located in Scottville, Michigan
- Approximately 1400 students
- Two-thirds of the students are women
- Sixty percent are part-time students
- The average age is 27
- Enrollment growth is slow and steady
- 2004-2005 48% of student body was first generation
- Of those that applied for aid, nearly 83% demonstrated need
- Nearly 42% of students were considered economically disadvantaged
Why Change?

- Need for a vision
- Create a team atmosphere
- Establish AQIP and Quality Movement
- Emphasize Student Success
- Provide opportunity for input
- Develop community
- Create new initiatives
How do you connect:

- Response to outside “drivers” (state, community)
- Internal “drivers” (staff, students, faculty)
- Accreditation
- Vision and Mission
- Assessment
- **AND create a campus atmosphere of inclusiveness through teams?**
Outcomes of today’s session:

- Learn how a vision and strategic plan were created
- Discover examples of student success
- See how state and national mandates can be included in a strategic plan
- Learn what to do and not to do when creating teams
- Be provided with CD-ROM including vision, strategic plan, institutional climate survey, action projects, PowerPoint
- Find out about lessons learned
Originally created by state legislatures to:

- Prepare students for academic transfer;
- Provide vocational-technical education, continuing education, developmental education;
- Provide community service through cultural and recreational events.
“Junior Colleges” were the outgrowth of some basic democratic philosophical assumptions:

- Education is necessary for the maintenance of a democracy;
- Education is essential for the improvement of society;
- Education helps to equalize opportunities for all people.

Today’s community college:

- Evolution of the community college now includes such things as distance learning and open admissions policies that ensure no member of the community need miss the chance to attend.

- Community colleges are now involved in leadership strategies for community, economic, and workforce development.
The Community College:

- Is a system for individuals, and it does what the best educational forms have always done: it helps individuals learn what they need to know to be effective, responsible members of society.

What is the community college role?

- Responsibility for academic transfer preparation
- Vocational-technical education
- Developmental education and community service
- Remediation in basic academic and workplace skills
- English as a second language
- Training in technology
- Continuing education and enrichment programs
Values

Values are a set of understandings in an organization about how to work, together, how to treat other people and what is most important. Before mission, vision, and strategy, a company must come to agreement on what it stands for.

Scott, Jaffee & Tobe
Organizational Vision, Values & Mission
Community College Values

- Access
- Community Responsiveness
- Clear focus on student learning
- Resourcefulness
- Entrepreneurial Spirit
- Creativeness
- Innovativeness

Dr. George Boggs
President of American Association of Community Colleges
Recent Threats to Community Colleges:

- Inadequate Financial Support
- Increasing Student Costs (tuition hikes)
- Financial Aid policies (Loans versus Grants)
- Challenges to Image (Second class?)
- Problems with transferability

Dr. George Boggs
President of American Association of Community Colleges
New Challenges for Community Colleges:

- Access (Turning away students by not being able to offer enough sections)
- Student Success (Beyond Access)
- **Accountability**

Dr. George Boggs
President of American Association of Community Colleges
Consider this:

“Community colleges have long been caught between a rock and a hard place – trying to provide access and opportunity for all who can profit, while maintaining academic standards in the face of increasing underpreparedness”.

John Rouche  
*Between a rock and a hard place: the at-risk student in the open door college*
Student Mix:

- 46% are 25 or older
- 32% are at least 30 years old
- The average age is 29
- 29% have annual household income of less than $20,000
- 85% work part-time or full-time
- 54% have full-time jobs
- 30% of those who work full time also attend classes full time (12 credits or more)
- Among students 30-39 years old, the rate climbs to 41%

Consider the following:

- Remedial education is a fixture in community colleges with 95% of community colleges offering remedial classes.
- 42% of entering students are underprepared in at least one of the basic skills (reading, writing, math).
- Mathematics is the greatest hurdle.

*No One to Waste* McCabe (2000)
Nontraditional student definition:

- “One who is financially independent, attends part time, works full time, delays enrollment after high school, has dependents, is a single parent, or does not have a high school diploma”.

Kay McClenney
League for Innovation
Why Strategic Planning?

- Strategic Planning and a Vision will provide teams with a common set of values and assumptions about change.
- When presented with a diverse group, take advantage of it.
- "If you don't know where you are going, you are certain to end up somewhere else."
  - Yogi Berra
I HAD A PRODUCTIVE TIME AT THE MANAGEMENT RETREAT.

WE GOLFed AS HARD AS WE COULD UNTil WE CAME UP WITH A NEW VISION FOR THE COMPANY!!!

BUT NO ONE WROTe IT DOWN, SO WE'RE GOING TO TRY AGAIN NEXT MONTH.
Ask yourself right now:

- Where are you and where do you want to go?
- Do you know who you are?
- Do you remember the “basics”?
As you wander during the process (and you will):

- Always focus on why we are here...the students!
- What do you really need?
- How do you know for sure?
- Are you really serving the community?
- Can you prove it?
Why Teams?

- Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a **common vision**. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results

  - Andrew Carnegie
Why teams? Part II

- Decisions are more apt to represent the wide range of interests present in an organization
- There is a possibility for more creative organizational solutions from a group than there would be from any individual leader
- Team members will have a better understanding, and be more apt to support organizational decisions that they have played a role in shaping

Bensimon & Neumann in *Redesigning Collegiate Leadership*
Consider this when creating teams:

- The fact is that all team structures are not alike. Teams, like organizations, need to be structured to accomplish the task at hand. Unique patterns of differentiation, interdependence, and coordination are required for each of them.

  Bolman & Deal – Reframing Organizations
Lesson Learned #1:

- Make sure that teams are created to be in line with the Strategic Plan, have goals that are connected to the plan and are not created because they are “pet projects” of a division or organizational unit.
WSCC Challenges:

- Not student-first oriented
- Quality movement working “under the radar”
- New to quality improvement, enrollment management, student success
- Adverse to cultural change
- Limited resources
- Response to internal and external drivers
- Accreditation
What are your challenges?
Strategic Planning

- Vision – Where we want to be
- Strategic Plan – The roadmap to get to the vision
- Mission Statement – What we currently are doing
- Core Values – Lofty aspirations and behaviors
- Core Strategies – Areas where the College chooses to lead
Definitions:

- Goals – Major milestones with 3-5 year horizon
- Action Plans – Shorter term outcomes, one year or less
- Key Steps or Tasks – Operational methods that form a building block used to implement a strategy
- Core Indicators – Measures that describe critical outcomes of goals, objectives
History… (Don’t think this is an overnight process)

- Original Vision Statement adopted in 1999
- Mission Statement adopted in 1999
- Core Values adopted in 2000
- Revised Vision Statement adopted in 2002
- Core Strategies adopted in 2005
- Begin work in 2007 on updating strategic plan with Board and consultant
Originally our President suggested components for a successful strategic plan:

- Create broad opportunities for participation
- Vice Presidents should provide leadership but not control
- Tie it into funding and include all resources
- Make it a direction outgrowth of the vision, mission, and core values
- Keep it relatively simple
- Connect existing and new committees and teams into the process
- Make it measurable
President’s Hope:

- Create a shared vision;
- Strengthen the team concept;
- Change the culture;
- Truly pursue greatness;
- Board approval.
First Strategic Plan

- Team approach (helped set the first set of teams)
- Strategic planning process
- Five priorities
- Board reaction
- No vision
Strategic Plan Concerns – Board of Trustees

- Lack of clearly articulated inspiring vision
- Without the vision, the plan cannot truly be strategic
- No alignment
- No Board of Trustees “ownership” of the plan
- Where is the “community” input?
- Too many details and not enough internal balance
- A complex plan that runs across division lines and team boundaries and is not yet tightly coordinated with the budget
- Not enough economic development
- The process
No vision...

- Without a clear picture of a desired future state, no plan can claim to be moving an institution in any desired direction
We needed to dream

- In order to be prepared for a future that will be different, you must first envision that future.
Initial “Dream” session

- The team was asked to dream of everything the college should be, write all of their ideas down on yellow post-it notes and place them on the wall. Ideas were then grouped together.
WSCC Vision Statement

Our vision is to be one of the premier community colleges in America, driven by a passion for –

- Assuring student success;
- Serving our entire community; and
- Pursuing greatness.
The Four Elements of Greatness:

- Alignment
- Positive Institutional Climate
- National Reputation
- Astonishment
For the strategic planning process to be effective we needed to:

- Mobilize the silent majority (minimize the doom and gloom)
- Change the culture
- Establish that everybody makes a difference
- Recognize that we are in the education field because we care about students
Lesson Learned #2

- Select team members based on interest, desire, and knowledge.
- Create teams that have a cross section of the campus
- Strength lies in differences, not in similarities. - Steven Covey
Institutional Climate Survey

- Conduct Climate Survey
- Identify problem areas that need work
- Prioritize problem areas
- Develop improvement action plans
- The survey is be repeated annually to study changes in institutional climate over time and the efficiency of improvement efforts.
- 93% of respondents “agree” or “strongly” agree that the college should embrace a “student first” philosophy
Putting Students First:

- Create a culture of responsibility, high standards and clear expectations;
- Provide a deep and broad array of student support services;
- When in doubt, lean in the direction of the student;
- Recognize that students are much more than customers, but recognize that they are also customers.
Defining Student Success

- One definition: “Students attaining their educational goals in the most efficient manner”.
- Student Success is the elimination of barriers that hinder students from accomplishing their educational goals.
- Student Success is NOT the lowering of academic standards.
- A strong student success model will help raise retention rates.
Points to Consider: Faculty

- To receive faculty buy-in they need to be part of the process.
- A great opportunity for faculty to see the “big picture.”
- An opportunity to work with others outside of their department and share their expertise.
- Decisions must be data driven.
The faculty perspective and concerns:

- Faculty must be involved in the process
- Standards must remain high
- Open enrollment and its impact
- Moving to a learning centered environment
- Need for gathering data
- Working with K-12
- Impact on faculty (class scheduling, course offerings, remediation)
The Third Year of Strategic Planning:

- Need to address new drivers such as The Cherry Commission Report, and “Keeping America’s Promise: Challenges for Community Leaders;
- Find a way to let the teams have more autonomy but still stick to the “basics” of the Strategic Plan
- What do you measure?
AQIP:

1. Helping students learn
2. Accomplishing other distinctive objectives;
3. Understanding student’s and other stakeholder’ needs;
4. Valuing people;
5. Leading and communicating;
6. Supporting institutional operations;
7. Measuring effectiveness;
8. Planning continuous improvement;
9. Building collaborative relationships.
AQIP Projects

- Action Project #1 Improve stakeholder assessment, data gathering, and data dissemination process
- Action Project #2 Institutional Climate Study
- Action Project #3 Improve success of at-risk students
## Nine AQIP Criteria

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<th>Data</th>
<th>Climate</th>
<th>At-Risk</th>
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<td>1 - Helping Students Learn</td>
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<td>2 - Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives</td>
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<td>3 - Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs</td>
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“Keeping America’s Promise: Challenges for Community Leaders”

1. The “Open Door” and its ramifications;
2. Needs of nontraditional students;
3. Needs of the Employed student;
4. Accountability;
5. The opportunities and attainment gap;
6. Remediation and basic skills;
7. Transfer and articulation;
8. Noncredit and workforce development;
9. Financial aid;
10. Supportive learning environments.
The Cherry Commission Report in Michigan

- Make higher education universal;
- Create community compacts for educational attainment (partnerships);
- Improve institutional completion measures;
- Expand opportunities for “Early College” achievement (dual enrollment);
- Improve the transfer process and award dual degrees (transfer wizard);
- Target adults seeking to complete postsecondary credentials.
Building the Second Strategic Plan:

- Acceptance of AQIP as accreditation model;
- Emergence of “Student Success”
- Measurement
- Institutional Climate Survey showed support for “Putting Students First”
- Realistic Goals
- Two members of each team assigned to the Strategic Planning Team
- We did our homework
The 2006-07 Strategic Plan accepted by the Board of Trustees:

- Five Core Strategies
- Seventeen Goals
- Thirty-nine Action Plans
- Numerous key steps or tasks used as starting points by team and divisions
- Owner, due date, resources, challenges, major benefits, measurable outcomes
Core Strategies

- Become a learning college, focusing on curriculum, training, and access;
- Increase student academic success by connecting, supporting, and assessing students and student support systems;
- Increasing economic opportunity by creating a learning workforce;
- Enhance commitment to community service;
- Maintain key indicators of institutional performance.
Some of our goals that address drivers:

- Review, create, and offer a curriculum that meets the goals and needs of students as life-long learners
- Provide a deep and broad array of student support
- Maintain and increase commitment to workforce development
- Enable and encourage students and employees to participate in community service
- Assure positive institutional climate
The work never ends; consider the past year:

- Teams were assigned goals based on the big picture
- They could change or add big goals
- Teams could determine their own action plans and tasks
- Teams were encouraged to benchmark and research what other colleges were doing
- There were no more Strategic Planning Team meetings
- Teams did mid-year reports and end-of-year reports
Lesson Learned #3

- Allowing participation by all employees in a team structure does not guarantee that people will become actively involved, or be happy employees.

- Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all.
  
  - Sam Ewig
Lesson Learned #4

- Teams needed to be involved, or at least have the ability for input, in the creation of the goals for the team.
- Team members need to be trained in those things they need to do, including “how to plan, how to measure, how to know when the goal is completed”
Some measurable success:

- Institutional Climate Survey
- Creation of an intrusive mentoring program;
- Initiation of a campus-wide assessment model;
- Focused data collection;
Moving to the next level!

- Board Ownership
- Bigger Goals
- Hiring of a consultant
The Next Step:

- Board sets the “tone” and big picture
- Assess strengths, weaknesses, challenges
- Revisit values, mission, and vision
- “Fireside” chats, focus groups
- Reassess core strategies, goals and action plans
- Implement plan including communication strategies, selection of key performance indicators
- Take the plan from “good” to “great”
The Board is focusing on:

- What sets us apart from other educational institutions;
- What we can be “great” at;
- Defining what type of culture is necessary to take WSCC from good to great;
- What opportunities can we take advantage from;
- Where does the plan need to be strengthened?
Next Year:

- Each team will have one member well trained in quality principles, philosophy, and tools.
- Teams will utilize the plan, do, study, act improvement process.
- Therefore, teams will develop and utilize tried and true quality tools for measurement of effectiveness and progress towards goal completion.
- We are conducting data collection through surveys.
Structured Improvement System
Define System

1. Conduct Survey
2. Conduct Forums
3. Prioritize Problems
Lessons Learned:

- Change is difficult
- Lasting change must be supported at the top
- Persistence pays off
- Broad involvement is worth the work
- Planning never stops
- Following a vision makes a difference
- Provide updates to the campus community
WSCC Teams

- Strategic Planning
- Student Success
- Curriculum Development (now Curriculum and Academic Policy)
- Academic Excellence (now Teaching and Learning)
- Infrastructure & Resource (now Technology and Equipment)
- Institutional Effectiveness
- Cultural Awareness
- Community Service (now College and Community Service)
- Green Team
Remember:

- Strategic Planning is only as good as the effectiveness of the teams and leaders working together!
Your CD-Rom

- Intro to the Planning Manual
- 2006-07 Strategic Planning Executive Summary
- Entire 2006-06 Strategic Plan
- Articles
- Cherry Commission Report
- AQIP
- Keeping America’s Promise article and Discussion Guide
- PowerPoint
- Institutional Climate Survey
- Student Survey
- Contact Sheet
Questions, Comments, Suggestions, Ideas, Thoughts
Contact me:

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