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Long-Range Planning and Faculty Development

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Long-Range Planning: An Overview

The concept of planning is as universally embraced as parenthood and pizza. Through planning, an individual or institution attempts to gain better control of the future, to make decisions in a systematic and thoughtful way. We may ask ourselves how anyone could oppose a process designed to achieve a greater modicum of order in our individual and institutional lives. And, indeed, it is the rare voice that is raised against the planning concept.

Nevertheless, systematic long-range planning is done by few people for personal and professional benefit and by even fewer institutions. Among those few institutions which engage in planning, one will find some businesses and governmental agencies and a few colleges or universities. And only a few of the colleges and universities that draw up plans draw up effective ones. In states where higher education agencies mandate planning, all state institutions draw up plans, although the quality of these varies considerably. It is my impression that private institutions engage in planning even less than public ones.

Given the fact that planning involves research, analysis, and the use of intelligence to make decisions about the future, all activities valued highly in institutions of higher education, it might seem strange that most of these institutions are not models of planning. However, it may not seem so strange if one recognizes that planning is a complex

process, demanding the collection of elusive data, some of it of questionable validity, the analysis of these data by people of strong and often differing points of view, the coordinating of inputs from many highly autonomous individuals and academic units, the seeking of their support for uncertain outcomes and the coaxing of them through the anxiety-producing process of evaluating their success in reaching the desired outcomes. Perhaps the most troublesome barrier to planning is the lack of conviction on the part of many key administrators that planning is essential.

In the face of these problems, it is not surprising to hear faculty members and administrators saying, "A university is not a business which makes widgets. It is a collection of intellectual and creative activities that are not measurable. Universities have survived and prospered for a thousand years without planning. Don't put us through this painful process. The planners are crying wolf. We don't believe any crisis is coming. If it should come, it will hit some other universities, not ours."

Despite this avoidance-type behavior, more and more people during the 1970s were forced to recognize the impending crunch (if not crisis) of the 1980s. The demographic statistics were clear. Not as many babies were being born, and continuing education, while it could attract more adult part-time students, would make up only a small portion of the declining full-time, 18-21 year-old enrollment.* The general economic climate, higher levels of inflation, and industrial decline led to the decline in the philanthropic capabilities of corporations and foundations. Then came the financial problems of federal and state governments and the cutbacks in their support for education. It became increasingly difficult for faculty members and administrators, no matter how much they would have liked to remain insulated from these unpleasant realities, not to recognize the importance of managing more carefully their institutions' shrinking financial resources. Thus, we have been drawn, some of us still reluctantly, to a consideration of systematic long-range planning.

*An example of poor planning is the decision to recruit larger numbers of older part-time students without planning for the special support services that they need. This encourages frustration and failure rather than success.

The relationship between faculty development and long-range planning may seem obvious. Both are the products of hard times in higher education. Faculty development gained momentum in the mid-1970s when colleges and universities stopped expanding, and academic change was no longer possible via the easy route of hiring new faculty. It was recognized that educational flexibility and change could only continue to occur if existing faculty members were encouraged to keep growing professionally and move in new directions.

Yet, in my view, colleges and universities have adopted faculty development programs more readily than they have adopted long-range planning processes. During the mid and late 1970s, foundations and governmental agencies funded a larger number of experimental faculty development programs, and also funded the dissemination of information about these programs. But rarely did I hear that faculty development programs begun in the 1970s were linked to long-range planning. Perhaps it was easier to start faculty development programs because they depended almost exclusively on voluntary faculty involvement and were seldom linked to any hard-nosed institutional decisions about termination of academic programs, or the threat of job loss implicit in institutional insistence that some faculty members refrain from teaching in disciplines other than their own. Perhaps institutions in the 1970s were not yet forced by financial pressures to resort to the more radical process, that of systematic, institution-wide long-range planning.

II. Long-Range Planning: A Faculty Development Strategy

In the next article, Dr. Paul will make the very important point that institutional research, long-range planning and faculty development should be integrated, if each of them is to be used most effectively within an institution. The resources available to support faculty development within any institution are limited. Only when faculty development activities are informed by institutional research and long-range planning can we be sure that limited faculty development resources are invested in the highest priorities of the institution and

are not squandered on low priorities that will not achieve the impact sought after by the institution.

While I was directing a large Kellogg Foundation-funded faculty development program for 17 colleges and universities in western Missouri and eastern Kansas, I was seldom sure whether I was investing in faculty members who would bring optimal benefits to their institutions, because the colleges and universities did not have long-range plans at that time, and thus there were no institutional development frameworks within which I would make decisions about the allocation of funds. Instead, I made decisions on the basis of which individual faculty members would use the funds most effectively for their own professional development.

Let me assume for the moment that we made a reasonably good case for putting faculty development within an institutional planning framework. Let me turn my focus from the institutional goals that should drive faculty development programs and look at the planning process itself as a way to assist faculty members to learn about national, social, economic and educational trends, about the working of their particular institution, and about their responsibilities within the institution.

Planning within a college or university is first and foremost academic planning. Therefore, faculty members should play an active role in the planning process. Planning is not likely to work unless the president of the institution makes it a high priority and continually prods others to complete their part in the process. Two of the president's first tasks should be to inform the faculty of an intention to begin the process and to select a committee to oversee it. This committee should have strong faculty representation. The committee, in turn, should establish other committees to perform the functions that Dr. Paul lists in Table 1.

Long-range planners, because of their preoccupation with allocation of scarce financial resources, have tended to discuss planning in terms of simulation models, cost-benefit ratios, productivity, efficiency and accountability. Faculty members tend to be ignorant and distrustful of these techniques and measures. They feel that their highest priority, the enhancement of quality education, will be ne-

glected, or worse, devalued, by these management-oriented planners (Yeager and Morrow, p. 3).

In order to encourage faculty participation in the planning process, the president should assure faculty of the following:

- A. Academic planning will drive the physical plant and financial planning process, not the reverse.
- B. Corporate planning techniques will be used only when they are appropriate for an educational institution.
- C. Faculty members will be involved in the planning process.
- D. The plan will be implemented. It will not gather dust on the president's desk, because it will be tied into the budget process.
- E. The plan will be flexible, because it will be updated annually and will be adjusted for changing internal and external conditions.
- F. It will not be a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, if the plan calls for the elimination of a particular major when the average class size drops below 15, the plan is not a device to ensure that the class size continues to drop in that major.

Once faculty members' concerns about the planning process have been addressed and they are receptive to participation in the process, there are a number of planning functions that they have special skills to perform. For example:

- A. The historians can draft a statement about the historical roots of the institution.
- B. Many faculty members, but perhaps particularly the social scientists (and even their upper division students), can help in the design of the institutional research necessary to describe the current institution in quantitative and qualitative terms.
- C. All faculty members should have the intellectual skills necessary to analyze external and internal factors that have an impact upon the institution. Faculty members ought to consider it a challenge to use this analysis as a basis for formulating a set of assumptions about the future of the institution.
- D. Faculty members also have skills in evaluation. They are continually evaluating their students, and it is not an impossible leap from instructional evaluation to the evaluation of

academic programs, student support services or other aspects of campus life.

- E. Of course, faculty enjoy designing new academic programs in their own or related disciplines, and at some point in the planning process, program planning occurs.

In order to enhance the faculty development dimension of the planning process, the president, vice-president for academic affairs or other administrators working with faculty in the process, should be willing to provide faculty with the funds needed to bring in speakers and consultants, to buy reading materials, pay for trips to other institutions where planning activities are successful, etc. By such activities, long-range planning and faculty development become synonymous. Faculty members can learn a great deal about national social and economic issues, about trends in higher education, about their own institution and how it works, and at the same time, an institutional plan can take shape.

If the administration can involve the faculty in significant ways, and at the same time expand their understanding, if the administration can then incorporate faculty recommendations into the plan and implement them, even if the plan involves some retrenchment features that represent painful adjustment for the faculty, faculty members are likely to identify with the plan and support it. Obviously, without faculty support, an academic plan is not likely to succeed. Therefore, this kind of planning is not only an essential part of institutional development, but it is an excellent faculty development strategy.