The Link among Strategic Planning, Curriculum Management, and Assurance of Learning: One School's Experience

Tanya Goette
Georgia College and State University

Howard Woodard
Georgia College and State University

Dale Young
Georgia College and State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/ciima

The Link among Strategic Planning, Curriculum Management, and Assurance of Learning: One School's Experiences

Tanya Goette
Georgia College and State University, USA
tanya.goette@gcsu.edu

Howard Woodard
Georgia College and State University, USA
howard.woodard@gcsu.edu

Dale Young
Georgia College and State University, USA
dale.young@gcsu.edu

ABSTRACT

Schools need effective processes to make certain there is a clear linkage among strategic plans, execution of the goals and objectives related to strategy, and the assurance of learning activities that demonstrate accomplishment of the plan. This paper describes the experiences and learning of one business school over a four-year period in establishing a clear linkage among strategy, execution, and measurement. Key components of success include credibility and trust between faculty and administration and a commitment by faculty members toward continuous improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is a critical activity for business schools. It allows schools to allocate rationally scarce resources, such as faculty development funding, and to make careful decisions about prioritizing and moving funds between various programs. A carefully crafted strategy should enable a business school to recognize and respond to changes that are constantly occurring in its market place. For example, many programs are considering, and/or are competing with, electronic degree offerings.

Planning produces a list of goals and objectives. Schools measure progress in reaching their objectives through various assurance of learning activities. For example, The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Standard 16 (AACSB, 2007) requires schools to create and demonstrate achievement of learning goals for their undergraduate programs. Schools often accomplish these types of curriculum development and curriculum management activities through a curriculum committee staffed by faculty members. Schools have well-established processes for managing curriculum and benefit when there is a direct link between strategy and execution (in this example, execution of curriculum goals).

This paper reports on one school's experiences over the past four years in strategic planning, carrying out the plan through various committees, and measuring what was accomplished during the process through various assessment activities. During that same period, the school was successful in achieving reaffirmation of accreditation from AACSB. The paper closes with a short list of "what we have learned" regarding shared governance.

PRIOR RESEARCH

As Sir William Osler (1849-1919), Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, once observed, "When schemes are laid in advance, it is surprising how often the circumstances fit in with them."(Osler, 1904, p. 144) When striving to accomplish a mission, planning becomes important to an organization (Boone & Kurtz, 1992). Merriam-Webster (2008) defines planning as "the act or process of making or carrying out plans, specifically, the establishment of goals, policies, and procedures for a social or economic unit" (planning, para.1). The dictionary defined a plan as "a method for achieving an end" (plan, para. 2). Plans are the expected development of the planning process (Boone & Kurtz). Planning might not guarantee success in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives; but it is rare for an organization to succeed solely by luck or circumstance (Boone & Kurtz). Boone & Kurtz suggested that the planning process causes managers to concentrate on the goals and objectives of the organization.

Boone & Kurtz (1992) suggests that an organization should have goals and objectives, as well as a detailed guideline on how to achieve the goals and objectives. The logical questions, which arise at this point, are (a) where will goals and objectives lead an organization?; (b) what will happen to the organization if it is successful in achieving its goals and objectives? Kaufman, Herman, & Watters (1996) stated that "the past is prologue to the future and planning is an attempt to make positive change and create—even invent—a new tomorrow" (p. 83). Planning must tackle the future; it is the roadmap for achieving the organization's vision. However, some administrators view planning or the future with anxiety; therefore, they are hesitant to plan. Kaufman et al. advocated that visions are crucial in any organization. Drucker (1993) reminded us, organizations should attempt to create the future since the organization cannot predict the future.

One may divide planning into three types: (a) strategic, (b) tactical, and (c) operational (Kaufman et al., 1996). Each type has a purpose and place in an organization and is interwoven. Merriam-Webster (2008) defined *strategic* as, "of great importance within an integrated whole or to a planned effect" (strategic, para.2c). This requires that the overall plan cover the vision of the organization as a whole. Kaufman et al. state that, "Strategic planning is a forward-looking, proactive option" (p. 4). Merriam-Webster (2008) defines *tactical* as "occurring at the battlefront" (tactical, para. 1). The tactical area is where the organization faces the day-to-day battles and must support the strategic vision of the organization. Merriam-Webster (2008) defines *operational* as "of relating to or based on operations" (operational, para.2). In turn, the dictionary defines *operation* as "performance of a practical work or of something involving the practical application of principles or processes" (operation, para.1).Operational planning undertakes the execution of the functions that comprise the tactical plan. Each type of planning becomes a subtype of the previous level, planning within planning at all levels of the organization (Kaufman et al.).

An organization must accomplish planning at all levels of an organization, but the strategic level is where senior administrators and managers must apply their time and effort (Kaufman et al., 1996). The focus of any organization wishing to succeed must be strategic planning (Drucker, 1973). All organizations must do a better job in their strategic planning functions (Kaufman et al.). Strategic planning has been around for a long time. Knezevich (1975) suggested that planning began when society organized to achieve its goals. If one is striving to achieve goals, then strategic planning becomes important. However, most of the movement of formal planning is a recent phenomenon of the twentieth century (Knezevich, 1975).

Drucker (1964) argued organizations must seek results; it is the purpose of their existence—to accomplish something. Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly (2000) held that "the planning function includes defining the ends to be achieved and determining appropriate means to achieve the defined ends" (p. 17). Intended results of strategic planning activities are the shared understanding about what the organization is endeavoring to achieve (Gibson et al., 2000). Strategic planning is not about making future decisions now or making future decisions following a rigid plan. It is about making present and on-going decisions anticipating the future (Drucker, 1973).

America must become a learning society to survive in a knowledge society (Toffler, 1970). Therefore, educational organizations must assist learners to become successful in a world that demands knowledge, thought, problem solving, and competence (Kaufman et al., 1996). Kaufman et al. suggested that continuing to put money and muscle into the current system is to deny the changing conditions involving education in society. Reality demands that administrators rethink and re-plan so education today can produce the useful citizens of tomorrow (Kaufman et al.). Drucker (1993) warned that continuing the current mode of planning and operation would simply make organizations better and better at doing what they should not do at all. Drucker said, "But one thing we can predict:

the greatest change will be the change in knowledge—in its form and content; in its meaning; in its responsibility; and in what it means to be an educated person" (p. 218). Even Albert Einstein observed that we could characterize our world as a proliferation of means and a confusion of goals. Educators argue about resources and processes, but do not have a clear purpose (Kaufman et al.). Kaufman et al. suggested that educators must set useful destinations before improved contributions will result to learners and the shared world. Changing the labels is not enough; a paradigm shift must occur in the way administrators look at education. They must become strategic thinkers.

Educational strategic planning should create a better future for individuals, groups, organizations, and society. Poor planning will bring education to an even worse destination than it is currently. Strategy, structure, and information go together. Mason (1983) advocated that, "Strategy begets structure; structure, in turn, begets the need for administration information" (p. 261). Strategic planning is very important for the administrator of any organization of higher education, for institutions of higher learning face the same challenges as any other organizations, to meet their vision and missions while attempting to survive in a changing society immersed in acquiring information and creating knowledge with fewer resources (Lewis, 1983).

The Commission on the Future of Higher Education Report (USDOE, 2006) reviewed the current higher education environment and made recommendations as to charting the future of U.S. Higher Education. The Commission noted:

> In this consumer-driven environment, students increasingly care little about the distinctions that sometimes preoccupy the academic establishment, from whether a college has for-profit or nonprofit status to whether its classes are offered online or in brick-and-mortar buildings. Instead, they care—as we do—about results. (USDOE, p. xi.)

The commission called in part for more evidence of learning and more transparency and accountability in higher education. The commission found concerning learning that:

> At a time when we need to be increasing the quality of learning outcomes and the economic value of a college education, there are disturbing signs that suggest we are moving in the opposite direction. As a result, the continued ability of American postsecondary institutions to produce informed and skilled citizens who are able to lead and compete in the 21st-century global marketplace may soon be in question. (USDOE, p.13)

In the area of transparency and accountability, the commission found:

> There is inadequate transparency and accountability for measuring institutional performance, which is more and more necessary to maintaining public trust in higher education. (USDOE, p.14)

The commission made the following recommendation concerning transparency and accountability:

> To meet the challenges of the 21st century, higher education must change from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education. Every one of our goals, from improving access and affordability to enhancing quality and innovation, will be more easily achieved if higher education institutions embrace and implement serious accountability measures. (USDOE, p.21)

The commission called on colleges and universities as well as accreditation organizations to address these issues to keep U.S. Higher Education in a leadership position in the world in the 21st century.

As Drucker (1964) stated that it is the purpose of an organization to "do something," so just what is a school of business suppose to do? The purpose is to educate students in the knowledge and understanding of the business world. This effort includes the globalization and ethical issues confronting society today. AACSB is holding schools of business more accountable today for showing how their students are learning. AACSB is prescient in

requiring that students must demonstrate learning achievement as part of the school's accreditation process (Martell, 2007).

Martell (2007) surveyed 179 schools in 2004 and 154 schools in 2006 to measure the influence of the AACSB standards on accredited schools and on schools seeking accreditation. The 2004 study received 70% of the responses from accredited schools. The 2006 study only surveyed accredited schools. The study found that schools are making progress in measuring Assurance of Learning (AOL) objectives. However, starting in 2007, the purpose of AOL is to implement changes in the curriculum and processes of instruction based on the information collected in the AOL process (AACSB, 2007).

AACSB (2007) requires the AOL process at the degree program level. However, some learning goals may not be valid at that level (Marshall, 2007). Marshall examined the validity of three learning goals at the program and the major level. The three goals were (1) management-specific knowledge, (2) problem solving, and (3) communication. The results strongly suggested that the management-specific-knowledge learning objective occur at the major level. Program-level learning goals are appropriate for the communications-learning objective. However, the evidence, although inconclusive, suggested that the problem solving learning objective occurs at the major level.

Pringle & Michel (2007) found that most of the business schools are in transition from indirect to direct measures in their assessment of learning goals. The study also found that 37% of the schools have appointed an associate dean, who has other administrative duties, to coordinate the assessment activities. Another 15.2% of the schools have used assessment committees to accomplish the task. Our approach at GCSU is a hybrid of these two approaches.

The key principle of AOL in schools of business today is to use the data collected to improve the programs. AACSB requires that the assessment be at the degree program level. AACSB (2007) suggests three approaches to Assurance of Learning. These approaches are: 1) selection, 2) course-embedded measurement, and 3) demonstration through stand-alone measurement. However, regional accreditation groups, as well as the governing boards, and the public in general want to see the process taken to the major level. Richardson, Blackbourn, Ruhl-Smith, & Haynes (1997) showed that educational organizations pursued continuous improvement methods from Deming and others in the past. It may be time to apply the continuous improvement methods based on our findings from the strategic management of the AOL process.

Strategic planning is important in the implementation of any initiative, even more so in the implementation of an AOL process. All stakeholders must be involved in the successful implementation process. To be successful, an institution must align the goals and objectives of the AOL process with the mission of the overall program, school, university, and the system in which the university is a member. How this one school approached this is the subject of the following sections of this paper.

The following sections describe the school, its planning processes, and how those processes lead to outcomes in the areas of annual action items and assurance of learning activities, with examples from a specific graduate program. We close with a brief description of what we have learned over the past several years regarding the management of planning processes in a business school.

THE BUSINESS SCHOOL

The business school is part of a state university which was designated as the state's public liberal arts institution ten years ago. The university's focus is undergraduate education, with some graduate programs. The university has four schools: arts & sciences, business, education, and health sciences; each of the three professional schools is accredited. University enrollment is limited in order to carry out the liberal art's mission; the university enrolls approximately 5,000 undergraduates and 1,000 graduate students. Undergraduate and graduate business school enrollment is approximately 1,200. The business school has over 40 tenured-track faculty lines.

The university houses undergraduate programs on the main campus; uses two satellite campuses in nearby cities for graduate programs in business, public administration, nursing, logistics, and education. Most of the business school's undergraduates are full-time, residential students; graduate students are primarily part-time, working professionals.

The business school offers a variety of undergraduate (e.g., accounting, computer science, economics, management information systems, and management) and graduate (e.g., MBA, Masters of Management Information Systems, and Masters of Accountancy) degrees. The business school participates in a consortium with five other state universities to deliver a Web-based MBA program.

The business school receives support and input from a board of business executives, divided into several work groups, or sub-committees, to address development, student professional growth and careers, and alumni interactions. The board meets several times during the year with the dean; it also works with students.

AACSB has accredited the business programs since 1997; the most recent reaffirmation of accreditation occurred in 2007. The associate dean works with the department chairs and faculty committees to achieve the school's mission and directs accreditation, strategic planning, and assessment activities.

BUSINESS SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANNING

Input for strategic planning in the school of business comes from multiple constituencies, including the business advisory board, the strategic management committee, the curriculum committees, and faculty members. In addition, students participate in review of the school's mission statement. (The co-authors of this paper include the associate/interim dean who chairs the strategic management committee, a faculty member who serves on the strategic management committee, and the chair of the school's graduate curriculum committee, who also directs assurance of learning activities for one of the school's graduate programs.)

Mission Review

Review of the school's mission statement, goals, and objectives has tended to follow the visitation cycle of the school's accrediting agency – AACSB. The strategic management committee reviews the mission and updates as necessary, near the beginning of the five-year cycle. The committee converts goals and objectives that flow out of the periodic review into operational procedures to facilitate assurance of learning activities for each of the school's undergraduate and graduate programs. Committee members are the dean, associate dean, department chairs, and one faculty representative from each department. The committee seeks input from faculty, advisory board members, and students prior to formal approval of any revisions by vote of the school's faculty.

The mission review includes an examination and update of the school's goals and objectives (see Appendix I). Faculty members carefully consider where the school should go and what we need to be doing to get us there. The school's goals fall into four broad categories: 1. activities that will distinguish our programs, 2. continuous improvement of academic programs, 3. expansion of graduate and professional development offerings, and 4. improvement of services to faculty, staff and students. We have developed/are developing assurance of learning measures for each objective.

The school patterns direct linkage between mission, goals, and objectives, and assurance of learning, at least in part, by the standards for business accreditation from AACSB (AACSB, 2007). Standards 1 – 5 focus on strategic management (e.g., mission statement and continuous improvement). Standards 15 – 21 are concerned with assurance of learning activities that define, and then measure, achievement of learning goals.

Annual Planning Cycle

The strategic management committee updates the school's strategic plan annually and generates a list of strategic priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. A variety of faculty-led committees across the school executes those strategic priority action items. The strategic management committee seeks input from the advisory board, and from faculty members, to create the list of action items. The action items reflect the strategic priorities of the school, as described in its mission, goals and objectives (see Appendix I). The school reports outcomes from the action items list back to the faculty and to the advisory board. Two curriculum committees (undergraduate and graduate) process action items that require curriculum change and then channel back to the faculty members for approval during a school-wide business meeting. Much of the credit for accomplishment of the action items goes to the faculty members who

serve on the school's committees and, thus, carry forward this aspect of the strategy. More importantly, this faculty-led strategic planning process guides the school-level activities during the year.

Role of the dean(s) and Department Chairs

The administrative team of the school is composed of a dean, associate dean, and the department chairs. This group meets each week during the school year to review issues and concerns that affect the school. The school has found this group to be an effective starting point for wide-ranging discussions on a number of topics. Once this administrative team determines that the ideas have merit, a widening circle of faculty members throughout the school examines the ideas. Proposals from the deans and department chairs, as well as from the strategic management committee circulate to the faculty as a whole through various committees. The iterative process of proposal generation, development, review and discussion, and finally, when appropriate, formal action in a faculty meeting, allows the time necessary for multiple viewpoints to be considered.

Key Elements of Planning Processes

Critical steps in the school's process for accomplishing action items are as follows:

- The administrative team generates initial revisions and proposals for a policy document. This intensive review by a small group is a time-efficient mechanism for generating a "starting point" document for the faculty committee review that follows.
- After a significant period of "kicking around" among the deans and department chairs, the team forwards the proposal to a specific faculty committee. This second step includes broad public distribution to facilitate open information sharing.
  - The associate dean has found that it is especially productive to copy all faculty members in the school with an e-mail message and attachment after bringing a proposal to a faculty committee. The "universal" distribution insures that everyone knows from the first day that a committee is now discussing a proposal.
- The committee solicits feedback from faculty members in each department, suggests changes, airs those changes in public forums, and produces motions. This process is time consuming, but it provides adequate time to hear faculty concerns and reduces the "I've never heard this before" syndrome.
- All policy actions, such as the development of an AQ/PQ definition, are brought as motions to the floor during a faculty meeting for faculty vote.

These processes (i.e., small group development, committee review, broad faculty examination, and public voting) have proven to be very successful for the school during the past four years. The public, iterative nature of the process helps increase both faculty confidence in the outcomes as well as faculty trust in the administrative team. For example, in the period of one summer and the following academic year, the school was able to complete five major tasks. The five major tasks included update the school's strategic plan, revise the promotion and tenure document, revise the workload policy that governs faculty teaching load, reach agreement on definitions for academic and professional qualifications (i.e., AQ/PQ), and create and begin the practice of annual evaluation of untenured faculty.

Strategy-driven Assurance of Learning

The strategic management committee, with input from the faculty, has operationalized the school's strategic goals and objectives. The operationalized objectives are the basis of the annual assurance of learning activities for the school. Outcomes of various objectives are assessed both within individual majors (e.g., marketing) and across the school for each degree program (e.g., the BBA degree). Faculty members report on course-embedded assessments; departments report on outcomes by the majors housed in each department.

The school collects assessment outcomes in two annual assessment outcomes reports, one for undergraduate programs and one for graduate programs. The curriculum committees (undergraduate and graduate) review and comment on the reports. In addition, faculty members meet to review assessment outcomes. Faculty members within each department first meet to discuss outcomes for that department's major(s). Following the departmental meetings, the faculty members from across the entire school meet as a group to review and comment on assessment outcomes.

Example of MMIS Assurance of Learning

The MMIS (Master of Management Information Systems) is one specialized graduate degree offered by the school of business. The faculty members that teach within the MMIS program are responsible for performing assurance of learning activities. The faculty members have taken the school goals and objectives to determine how the MMIS degree "fits". For instance, most courses apply to goal number two (see Appendix 1). In order to determine how a specific course develops students' core business knowledge, the faculty discussed what important concepts the students needed to retain after they completed the course. The faculty member then lists these concepts on the course syllabus as objectives for the course.

The faculty member teaching the course has the responsibility of measuring how well the students are meeting the course objectives. The faculty members accomplish through projects or exam questions, for example. Faculty use a grading rubric to measure how well the students met the objectives. The MMIS faculty members discuss the results in a meeting the next semester which may lead to a change in that course or other courses within the MMIS program. By using the same rubric over time, Faculty hope that longitudinal data will be able to show improvements in the quality of the MMIS degree.

EXECUTION OF GRADUATE STRATEGY

Recent actions relating to the school's graduate programs provide an excellent example of the development and execution of strategy. The graduate curriculum, admissions, and standards committee (GCC) and the strategic management committee worked together to review graduate programs, develop a series of strategic initiatives for those programs, and then, over a period of less than two years carry forward most of those initiatives (some initiatives are still in process). The school's faculty members were involved in the review and approval of each initiative. The business advisory board received regular progress updates.

The job of the GCC is to work within the strategic initiatives to oversee and improve business school graduate programs. During the process of creating the strategic initiatives for graduate programs, the committee reviewed the strategic direction of the oversight board for all public universities in the state. In addition, the GCC examined the school's graduate enrollments by location (i.e., the main campus and the two satellite campuses), looked at direct competition in the region, noted regional population growth patterns in the immediate surrounding counties, and identified potential sources for new graduate students.

Purpose Statement for Business Graduate Programs

A purpose statement and a set of guidelines, which flow out of that purpose statement, drive strategies for graduate programs in business. The school has aligned that purpose statement with the mission statement of the school of business, and with the mission and strategies of the university.

> Purpose Statement – Graduate Programs in Business: *Graduate programs in the J. Whitney Bunting School of Business enhance the development of professional managers who are grounded in the liberal arts and skilled in business disciplines.*

Strategic Initiatives for Graduate Program*s*

The Strategic Management Committee and the GCC, in consultation with both the faculty of the school of business and members of the business school's advisory board, developed a set of strategic initiatives to guide business graduate program development. See Appendix II for a detailed explanation of the initiatives and the outcomes from

each initiative. In summary, the strategic initiatives that were a spin-off of the strategic planning processes described earlier, produced the following outcomes:

- We reviewed learning outcomes for all graduate courses, benchmarked program structures for part-time programs, and developed several new concentrations.
- The GCC is examining a study abroad component for the full-time MBA program.
- The GCC agreed to test a GMAT waiver based on years of work experience for a specialized, cohort program.
- The GCC modified MBA foundation requirement so they are consistent across all programs.
- The school has surveyed two recent graduating MBA classes to determine student perceptions of the value of the program.
- The school completed updates on all Web-based materials for graduate programs and is developing a promotional plan for graduate offerings.
- The school is actively participating in the university-level strategic planning exercise to develop strategic initiatives for all graduate programs.
- The school is cultivating relationships with area alumni, through hosted visits to various sites, which double as networking opportunities for current students.

Thus, these strategic planning processes have produced significant program progress in the areas of structure, competitiveness, and promotional activities.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Several factors have contributed to the progress we have witnessed in the business school over the past several years. Factors include the growing reputation of the university across the state, the consistent increases in test scores of incoming undergraduate students, a state economy that has been relatively stable, and a legislature that is supportive of higher education. In addition, a university president and provost that have supported business programs, and successfully hiring and integrating a number of new faculty members within the business school; nearly a third of the school's tenure-track faculty are new within the past five years. Most importantly, the school benefited from the single-minded focus of faculty on continuous improvement and on supporting the strategic direction of the school.

During this period, we have learned the following about strategic planning and execution of those plans through annual action items:

- <u>Process is at least as important as product</u>. You need a clearly articulated strategy, aligned with the strategic direction of the state system (where appropriate) and the university, to evaluate accurately new opportunities, but a "perfect" strategy is useless without support of administration, faculty, and staff members. Few things will alienate faculty more quickly, and do more damage to the credibility (i.e. perceived truthfulness) of the dean and associate dean, than to bypass fundamental processes.
- <u>Get buy-in</u>. Absolutely, faculty member support for process and policy changes is fundamental. It is important to allow faculty time to "buy in" and to have multiple opportunities to express their views. Although consensus building is time consuming, it is essential. With shared governance, top-down planning is not advisable or workable.
- <u>Do not wait for everyone to agree</u>. Shared governance means (in part) that you rarely gain unanimity on an issue. A school must be able to acknowledge a minority position of strongly held and divergent opinions, but still move ahead.
- <u>Leave something on the table</u>. Sometimes you just need to "let it go." Do not risk alienating key influencers within your school just so you can push forward an action item, even if there are some very rational arguments for supporting the action. This item suggests you must create a balance between the second bullet (get buy in) and the third bullet (if you wait for everyone to agree nothing will ever get done). If a proposal goes to committee, and the committee "chops" something out because there is faculty consensus for the action, then leave it out. Do not strain your credibility by forming a different committee (or a "special" ad-hoc committee) and trying for revisions in the next calendar year because the administrative team is unhappy with an outcome of a public, faculty-lead, committee process.

- Give the plan time to grow. Strategic planning is a circular or repetitive process; you never get it perfect the first time. Ideas can be refined, over time, as you seek input from various sources, so do not get in a hurry, (but, obviously, do not stall either). Look for, listen to, and acknowledge the value of many different opinions.

- Be approachable and accessible. This bullet, aimed at deans, assistant and/or associate deans, and department chairs, is very important. The types of strategic, organization-wide activities described here require large amounts of communication. Make it easy for faculty and staff members to get to you; keep your doors open; do not hide behind a secretary; walk around the building and talk to faculty, and to your staff (you know, the people who reserve classrooms, file your expense forms, and do the on-line ordering of your textbooks!) – do those things regularly. It is amazing what you will learn by listening. Even if you cannot "fix it", at a minimum, you can let people know you hear them.

- Keep everybody informed all the time, during the strategy development process. You know you are communicating at a correct level when faculty members complain to the associate dean about the amount of e-mail he/she is sending out! Conversely, a worst-case scenario occurs when many say, "we have never heard about this" just before a vote. Hold forums (even if attendance is spotty), attend department meetings, and send e-mail regularly. The "touchier" the subject (e.g., changing travel budgets, examining "sacred content" in MBA core courses, developing a workload policy, or modifying promotion and tenure guidelines), the greater is the need for input across the entire school.

- Report your successes as you execute strategy. Be very explicit to the advisory board, to university administration (in your annual report to the provost), to AACSB, and to faculty members about the progress the school is making as it executes its strategic plan.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

What we have described here works for us and was successful during reaffirmation of accreditation. It works in a setting where there is reasonable provision of necessary resources, supportive upper-level administrators, and stability at both the university and state level. Success is an outcome of trust and credibility across the school, enabled by the key planning processes described earlier that are open, iterative, and based on consensus. The processes worked during a transition from a long-term dean and a significant change in the mission of the university to a liberal arts focus. The list of accomplishments during execution of the strategic initiatives for graduate programs gives evidence of faculty commitment and support toward continuous improvement in the school.

The processes are no means perfect, and there remain, as you would expect, challenges in regards to resources and programs. Although the operating environment of the school may not make these processes directly transferable to all other schools, we believe the principles ("what we have learned") do have value in various settings.

REFERENCES

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International. (2007). *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation.* [Electronic version]. Retrieved May 25, 2008, from http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/process/documents/AACSB_STANDARDS_Revised_Jan07.pdf

Boone, L. E., & Kurtz, D. L. (1992). *Management* (4th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Drucker, P. F. (1964). *Managing for results.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Drucker, P. F. (1973). *Management: Tasks, responsibilities, practices.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.

Drucker, P. F. (1993). *Post-capitalist society.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Gibson, J. L., Ivancevich, J. M., & Donnelly, J. H., Jr. (2000). *Organizations: Behavior, structure, processes* (10th ed.) Boston, MA: Irwin, McGraw-Hill.

Kaufman, R., Herman, J., & Watters, K. (1996). *Educational planning: Strategic tactical operational*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Company, Inc.

Knezevich, S. J. (1975). *Administration of public education* (3rd ed.) New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Lewis, J., Jr. (1983). *Long-range and short-range planning for educational administrators*. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Marshall, L. L. (2007). Measuring assurance of learning at the degree program and academic major levels. *Journal of Education for Business*, 83(2),101-109.

Martell, K. (2007). Assessing student learning: are business schools making the grade. *Journal of Education for Business,* 82(4), 189-195.

Mason, R. O. (1983, July). *Information systems strategy and corporate strategy*. Paper presented at the meeting of the 75th Anniversary Colloquium on Information Services, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA.

Merriam-Webster Online Collegiate Dictionary (2008). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc. Retrieved May 25, 2008, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/

Osler, W. (1904). *Aequanimitas.* London: H.K. Lewis.

Pringle, C. & Michel, M. (2007). Assessment practices in AACSB-accredited business schools. *Journal of Education for Business*, 82(4), 202-211.

Richardson, M. D., Blackbourn, R. L., Ruhl-Smith, C., & Haynes, J. A. (Eds.). (1997). *The pursuit of continuous improvement in educational organizations.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.

Toffler, A. (1970). *Future Shock.* New York: Bantam Books.

U.S. Department of Education, (2006). A test of leadership: charting the future of U.S. higher education. Washington, D.C.. Retrieved July 14, 2008, from http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html.

APPENDIX I

Mission Statement, Implications, Goals, and Objectives

Mission Statement

The mission of the J. Whitney Bunting School of Business is to foster the development of capable business professionals who are responsible citizens grounded in a liberal arts education. The school is dedicated to continuous improvement in business education and professional practice through faculty scholarship.

Implications of the Mission

- Faculty members are actively engaged in scholarship. The school values various forms of scholarship. However, given the mission of the university and the school, faculty scholarship in the school emphasizes contributions to practice, and learning and pedagogical scholarship.
- We serve many groups, including undergraduate students, graduate students, working adults, and a variety of organizations. Our undergraduate students rank among those at leading universities in the state in terms of entry level SAT scores; most attend school full time. Our typical graduate student works full time in a middle management position and completes the graduate degree in about two years.
- Capable business professionals possess knowledge and skills within the core business disciplines and have a specialized understanding of their chosen field. Business knowledge and skills are developed through learning both inside and outside the classroom.
- Responsible citizenship implies a global perspective, an appreciation of diversity, and an awareness of ethical issues and obligations.
- A liberal arts education helps develop an inquisitive mind, analytical reasoning, effective communication skills, and community involvement.

Goals and Objectives

To support the mission of the university and the school, the faculty and staff of the School of Business at Georgia College, in partnership with constituencies such as our advisory board, alumni, and university advancement, will

1. Distinguish our undergraduate and graduate business programs, leveraging the university's liberal arts foundation, by
   - Enhancing student understanding of responsible citizenship
   - Emphasizing ethical principles, dilemmas, and professional codes
   - Fostering global understanding and cross-cultural awareness
2. Continuously improve the quality of our undergraduate and graduate programs by
   - Developing students' analytical skills
   - Developing students' communication skills
   - Developing students' core business knowledge
3. Enhance programs for graduate and professional learning by
   - Marketing the MBA program and its concentrations
   - Developing workshops for external constituencies
   - Incorporating appropriate technology into the school's programs and in state-wide consortiums
4. Improve faculty, staff, and student services by
   - Enhancing student honor societies, service clubs, and advisory boards
   - Providing exemplary academic advising services
   - Developing initiatives for student professional growth
   - Fostering career placement and networking opportunities
   - Supporting faculty and staff development, and faculty scholarship
   - Increasing external funding and reallocating existing state funds

APPENDIX II

Strategic Initiatives for Graduate Programs

The Strategic Management Committee, and the GCC, in consultation with both the faculty of the school of business and members of the business school's advisory board, has developed a set of strategic initiatives to guide business graduate program development. The order of the initiatives does NOT suggest relative priorities.

1. The school will review <u>graduate program structure and content</u> to ensure that its offerings are in step with both leading and competitive programs.

- The school will examine course offerings to insure they constitute a contemporary and well-aligned curriculum.
- The process of curriculum review will consider the foundation courses as well as the total number of credit hours required to complete a graduate business degree.
- There may be a need to provide a higher level of program variety (above the currently offered MBA) through emphasis areas in the MBA.
- If there is a need among major employers in central Georgia for graduate programs tailored to the needs of their employees, can/should we offer such programs?

<u>Initiative 1: Program Structure and Content, Update of Actions Taken</u>

- The GCC reviewed key learning outcomes (both skills and core knowledge) across MBA core courses during the spring 2007 and reported its findings in the opening faculty retreat, fall 2007.
- The GCC reviewed the program structure of leading, part-time MBA programs during the fall 2007; the school's graduate faculty discussed the findings.
- In spring 2007, the faculty approved MBA concentrations in health care administration, information systems, and accounting Graduate students are beginning to enroll in three masters-level concentrations within the MBA (fall 2007).
- In the fall 2007, the school began teaching a two-year, lock-step MBA program in Sandersville, using the facilities of Sandersville Technical College. The one-time program aims to enhance regional economic development. The program responds to a request from a member of the Board of Regents to provide a tailored program for working professionals in the Sandersville area.

The GCC reviewed the twenty top part-time MBA programs as identified by *Forbes* to gather information on each school's program, method(s) of delivery, admission requirements, estimated period for degree completion, and any other unique features that might be present. Conclusions:

- Core is standard: 9-11 courses. The Committee discussed the two GCSU courses that differ from the majority: Accounting and Ethics.
- Foundation Courses: All have economics, accounting, and statistics. Only a few require finance.
- Internships/Study Abroad: The Committee suggests that all full time MBA students in Milledgeville should complete an internship. In addition, all non-international students must complete a study abroad.

The committee discussed these findings and determined that a) our course offerings and hours required were consistent with most programs; b) that the committee wants to recommend an internship as an elective for all full-time students and those without work experience; and c) that any internationalization of the curriculum will be encouraged. Then the graduate faculty as a whole discussed these issues. To encourage enrollment in the special Sandersville cohort, the GCC agreed to allow the cohort to serve as a pilot study for waiver of the GMAT exam. The GCC set up guidelines for the granting of a GMAT waiver. Students filed petitions citing their management work experience and reasons for wanting to obtain a MBA degree. The GCC then reviewed all the petitions and granted a number of GMAT waivers. If these students successfully complete the MBA, then the GCC will discuss allowing petitions by students to waive the GMAT. (Performance of this cohort, early in the program, is encouraging.)

2. The school will review the <u>methods used to deliver graduate education</u>.
- The school will review the proper role of electronic educational offerings, within the context of our mission and target markets, <u>for delivery of foundation courses</u>.
- The school will evaluate hybrid delivery (e.g., a combination of classroom and electronic instruction) for some program content. The hybrid option may be of value in the delivery of <u>foundation courses</u> as it may help make best use of faculty resources.

Initiative 2: Delivery of Graduate Education, Update of Actions Taken
- The school continues to participate in the expanded Georgia WebMBA program, which starts two fall cohorts and, as of spring 2008 a spring cohort, each year.
- The dean and associate dean, along with GCSU faculty who will teach Georgia WebMBA courses in 2008-2009, heard a presentation (January 2008) on the effectiveness of the on-line modules that are used in the Georgia WebMBA and in the MBA program at Kennesaw State as a means of delivering foundation courses.
- The department chairs reviewed demand for MBA foundation courses (February 2008), based on reports created by the associate dean and the school's director of graduate programs, and discussed delivery options that make use of professionally qualified instructors.

The GCC discussed the problem of the various cohort schools in the Georgia WebMBA requiring different foundation courses to enter into the Georgia WebMBA program. The GCC voted to reduce the school's Georgia WebMBA foundation courses from ten to four leaving accounting, finance, statistics, and economics, which are the same courses required for the school's on-campus MBA. The GCC discussed the idea of offering a one-day refresher statistics workshop for students admitted into the MBA program. Questions: How do we set up the workshop? Do we offer it at the beginning of each semester? Do we make it mandatory for all accepted students? The committee decided to plan a trial run before making any final decisions. The committee discussed using exams to satisfy foundation courses. The committee members will need to raise this issue with faculty members in their respective departments for feedback.

3. The school will examine ways to <u>measure the value we add</u> to the careers of graduate students.
- Can we develop metrics within our assurance of learning activities that allow the business school to evaluate the impact of graduate programs on the professional development of students?
- Can/should the school improve internship opportunities for graduate students?

Initiative 3: Measuring Value Added Update of Actions Taken
- One alternative being considered for curriculum change in the MBA program (spring 2008) is an internship as an elective option for full-time students in the main campus program.
- The school has surveyed two recent graduating MBA classes (spring and summer 2007) to determine student perceptions of the value of the program. The school shared the survey results with the department chairs and the Graduate Curriculum Committee. During the spring 2008, we are surveying MBA alumni using the same instrument.

4. The school will investigate methods to use for marketing its graduate programs.
- The school should consider multiple methods of program promotion, including: direct contacts with community groups and major employers, and various forms of advertising.

Initiative 4: Marketing Graduate Programs, Update of Actions Taken
- The school began publishing a flyer for distribution in Macon (fall 2007) as a means of promoting its graduate course offerings and workshops.
- The school is completing updates on all Web-based materials for graduate programs (spring 2008).
- The school surveyed faculty members (spring 2008) as a means of developing a list of potential workshop topics based on faculty expertise and interest for Macon.
- The faculty coordinator of graduate programs, the director of graduate programs, and members of the graduate faculty have actively promoted the school's graduate programs in outreach to a variety of organizations. Examples of outreach during calendar year 2007 include visits to service clubs (e.g., the Centerville Rotary), Macon State College – a feeder school for the school's graduate programs (multiple

visits), the Monroe County Hospital (a neighboring county), the graduate open house at the GCSU Center for Graduate & Professional Learning in downtown Macon (multiple visits), and Robins AFB. Representatives from each of the school's graduate programs attended the university-wide career fair, March 4, 2008.

GCC members discussed the idea of faculty workshops on topics not typically presented in courses as a means of augmenting the selection of offerings. Faculty members are encouraged to conduct workshops to promote the school and its graduate programs. The GCC will schedule a graduate faculty meeting at the beginning of fall 2008 to discuss the Macon market. What can we do to grow the MBA program in Macon and Milledgeville (site of the main campus)? Faculty will continue to discuss strategy.

5. The school will create a system to maintain contacts with graduates of its masters programs.
- Graduates, especially those living in the school's market area, could be an important source of referrals for new students, classroom speakers, and development opportunities for the program.

Initiative 5: Contacts with Graduate Alumni, Update of Actions Taken
- During the spring 2008, we will survey graduate alumni using the assessment instrument created by the Graduate Curriculum Committee. The survey mailed during the first week of February 2008, had a follow-up mailing in early March.
- The school maintains contact with undergraduate and graduate alumni through its Atkinson Notes newsletters.
- The school is cultivating relationships with Atlanta-area alumni through its "get on the bus" trips for students hosted by various businesses in Atlanta. Host firms include Coca Cola and Chic-fil-A. The meetings provide professional development and networking opportunities for current students as they interact with Georgia College alumni.

During the last year, the GCC played an active role in linking the governance of business school graduate programs to the strategic initiatives and purpose of the graduate program.