Planning Council Assessment of Strategic Plan Review Process

Overview

The Planning Council (PC) is responsible for overseeing the Strategic Plan Review process. The Strategic Plan Review process involves several areas:

- Review of past Strategic Plan Review process, identifying areas that require change and improvement.
- Taking steps to facilitate Strategic Plan item entry, and Strategic Plan item review.
- Publicizing how Strategic Plan Review process works, and how Strategic Plan items are entered.
- Reviewing Strategic Plan items, calling for more justification and clarification of item activities.
- Voting on Strategic Plan items to prioritize list for Administration.

Analysis of past review process

During the Spring 2006 semester, the PC participated in the Biennium Budget request by prioritizing the Strategic Plan items. This consisted of several meetings with the PC members asking questions about individual items. Guests were invited to answer questions about certain items (that required clarification). The Strategic Plan items were stored in a Microsoft Word document that was put together by Cynthia Smith (based on feedback to her from interested parties). Besides receiving printouts of the Strategic Plan items, the items were shown on an overhead project during the meeting discussions. This culminated in a six-hour marathon voting session that put the items into tiers. While the process was time-consuming, most PC members felt they had learned more about the budgeting process and were encouraged to be part of the prioritization process.

In the Spring 2007 semester, the PC formed a subcommittee consisting of Scott Murakami, Marcia Roberts-Deutsch, and xxx to review the Strategic Plan for the Supplemental Budget request prioritization. They noted several problems including not being able to determine the party(s) that submitted an item, difficulty with entering items (since the items were stored in a Microsoft Word document, making it hard for more than one person to enter items at a time), and concerns with the longevity of the item data (again being a Microsoft Word document). Many of the items in the Strategic Plan for this cycle were already in the plan. This coupled with the hard work of the subcommittee to organize the plan resulted in much less meeting time spent for the PC to prioritize the items. The PC noted that there needs to be a stronger connection between justification for a Strategic Plan item being tied to Program Reviews and Assessment. This was partly in response to the Accreditation Team’s recommendation #2 made in 2007, and partly because of the recognition of the role assessment needed to play in continuously improving our programs.
Areas showing improvement

For this year's (Fall 2007-Spring 2008) Strategic Planning Review process, several items were improved.

- The PC formally passed (on October 12, 2007) a document entitled "HCC Statement on the relation between Assessment and the Strategic Plan" that formally spells out how assessment will be a primary way to justify inclusion of an item in the Strategic Plan. The campus was notified via e-mail that this document was passed and would be used in the Strategic Plan Review process.

- The PC formally adopted (on December 7, 2007) a draft version of a document entitled "Planning and Assessment Guide" that clarifies that Strategic Plan Review process. While this document will be updated in the future, it was accepted as a working version. The campus was notified via e-mail that this document was approved and describes the Strategic Plan Review process.

- A database was created along with a web-based interface to facilitate entry of items into the Strategic Plan. This interface required the name of the responsible party for each item, making it much easier for the PC to ask questions about an item. This interface also required that the submitter to enter justification for each item, and also tried to enforce aligning the item with a UHCC Strategic Goal and Subgoal. This interface made it easier for multiple people to enter items into the plan at once. This interface also made it easy for any PC member to look at an updated list of the Strategic Plan items anytime they were connected to the Web.

- The PC's Laulima site was utilized to hold online discussions of the Strategic Plan items. PC members were encouraged to post questions and reply to questions on individual items both during meetings and outside of meetings. This served a dual purpose of providing a record of some of the discussions as well as allowing some of the discussions to take place outside of a meeting.

- Hopefully as a result of an improved ability for the PC to clarify Strategic Plan items, the actual voting for prioritization of the items only took 2 and a half hours. The results of this vote were put out to the campus via e-mail by the next working day.

- E-mail was sent to notify the campus of how the PC reviewed the Strategic Plan items, how to view details of an individual item, and a link showing the online discussion. This is an improvement on the transparency of the process.

- The PC members have made a good start on requiring that justification be tied to assessment/forecasting. Strategic Plan items that had solid justification based on assessment received high priority (e.g. itemID 1). Strategic Plan items that align with the UH System three R's (Repair, Replacement, Renew) received high priority (e.g. itemIDs 25, 44, and 49). In addition, the Achieving the Dream initiative (a HCC
Program Change Request (PCR)) also received high priority. At the same time, some Strategic Plan items that might have received higher priority in the past based on need, did not receive high priority because of vague requests/justification (e.g. itemID 13).

**Areas needing further improvement**

- Many members of the campus still do not have a clear idea of how the Strategic Plan Review process is supposed to work. This is somewhat understandable at this point in time, considering how the process is relatively new. However, this situation cannot be allowed to continue. Campus members who have been here longer than about 5 years, need to understand that the process for requesting resources is not the way things used to be. New employees and campus members who have been here less than about 5 years need an orientation on how this process works.

- The PC did not receive a summary of the Program Assessment Reports. In addition, the Program Assessment Reports that were done often did not identify needs based on assessment. Once again, this situation is understandable at this point and this is *not* a criticism of the efforts of the Assessment Committee. Providing an institutional method for creating assessments (to make it easy for any department/instructor to create an assessment) could be beneficial in improving this situation. Having a standard way to create an assessment and having a standard report format is recommended. A standard way of creating an assessment (that would mainly require that the creator know the SLOs they are trying to assess) would make it easier to provide training (just one survey-making tool as the target) and make it so everyone can run assessments. In addition, having a standard report format would make it easier to train people how to analyze the assessment results. Even further, a standard report format makes it easier for bodies like the PC to compare one Program Assessment Report to another (comparing apples with apples).

- Related to the above item, Strategic Plan items were often not tied to Program Assessment Reports. This is probably partly due to the Program Assessment Reports lacking in analysis, and probably partly due to this requirement being relatively new to the programs.

**Areas requiring changes**

- Up until now, the Assessment Officer has been the main resource for Programs in doing assessment, assessment analysis, and Program Reviews. Now that we have made some progress in building the process of the Strategic Plan review cycle, perhaps it is time to further enlist the aid of Program Deans and Division Chairs in guiding programs towards creating better Program Assessment Reports. The idea would be that for the next cycle of Strategic Plan review, that Dean or Division Chair
will be able to make a better case for a Strategic Plan item receiving high priority, if the item is clearly tied to the Program Assessment Report.

- Creating an institutional assessment tool. This tool would make it easier for any department/instructor to create an assessment. This tool would also standardize the report format making it easier to analyze the results (and easier to train people to analyze the results). In addition, this tool would provide for storing the results in a databases that can be further queried in the future.

- Strategic Plan items need to be tied to measurable outcomes, since this what both UHCC and UH System are requiring. The campus needs to have a way of aggregating items that overlap in terms of UHCC Strategic subgoals. Suppose a subgoal outcome is to increase the number of students completing two-year degrees by 200 by the year 2015. If there are several Strategic Plan items that are funded that affect this number, we need a way of figuring out how much to associate with each item activity.

- Related to measurable outcomes, the campus needs to decide the order in which the measurable outcomes are set. One way is for the campus to determine all the activities we want to pursue first, and then go back to UHCC and say what our target outcomes will be based on our priority of these activities. The other way, is to take the target outcomes from the UHCC system, and try to ensure that we have enough activities to support those outcomes. Currently, UHCC expects us to do things the first way as this takes into account the demographics and programs of the individual campus. Either way, we need to come up with a way to aggregate or split numbers among several different Strategic Plan item activities.