Category Eight: Planning Continuous Improvement

Context for Analysis
8C1 Five-ten year institutional vision
The College’s vision statement was adopted in 1999 to read: Waukesha County Technical College is building a better community – one learner at a time. Through education, partnerships and technology, WCTC is preparing learners for tomorrow and is linking our community to the future and the world economy.

At the time the vision was adopted, employees wished to communicate their continued dedication to being a student-learning centered organization. The College’s primary purpose was not only to improve students’ quality of life by helping them succeed in entry level employment, but to prepare them with Critical Life Skills (CLS) that would help ensure their future career development and lifelong learning. Employees also recognized their growing partnership role in regionalization and their need for using technology to expand educational opportunities to students world-wide.

These beliefs continue today. In fact, WCTC has free-standing, two-sided table signs visible around campus that read: “How does this affect student learning?” (side one); and “Everyone contributes to helping students achieve success” (side two).

8C2 Short and long-term strategies
In keeping with its Carver Policy Governance model, WCTC’s District Board has developed End Statements (Figure 8-1) that describe the benefits or long-term results that are desired for WCTC students and other customers and define the expectations of the college in meeting its mission.

Figure 8-1 District Board End Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Taxpayers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>will obtain the CLS as well as the occupational and technical skills needed to achieve their educational goals at an affordable cost.</td>
<td>will be able to develop and maintain a skilled workforce through available and accessible educational offerings.</td>
<td>will benefit from customer driven educational services provided through efficient and effective use of limited resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The College’s short-term strategies are its strategic goals. These four-year goals (O1) help guide WCTC in achieving its mission, vision, and ends. They focus on the following: (1) providing lifelong learning opportunities; (2) optimizing the community’s access to and use of college offerings; (3) improving internal collaboration and maximizing external partnerships; (4) ensuring a diverse and highly-qualified workforce; and (5) improving processes to measure institutional effectiveness. The goals tie directly to the mission of enhancing the community’s quality of life by providing high quality, affordable and accessible lifelong learning opportunities and to the vision of linking the community to the future and world economy.

Processes
8P1 Planning process
WCTC has a long history of engaging in various steps of its strategic planning process on both an ongoing and annual basis. WCTC’s strategic planning begins with a review of its broad statutory mission (Figure 8-2).

Figure 8-2 Planning Process

Annually, the District Board and president review and evaluate the currency and effectiveness of the mission, vision, values, ends and goals. The District Board leads the process of modifying the End Statements when necessary. Updates to the mission, vision and values have been led by the president with all-staff participation following an in-depth analysis of our key customers, stakeholders and their needs.
In 2000, the college adopted a set of five strategic goals (8C2) following an analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses and the external environment. During 2001-02 and through 2004, strategic action plans (8P3) were aligned with these goals. In 2002-03, steps were taken by the then new administration to update the strategic plan (for 2004-05) beginning with a critical assessment of the college’s strengths and weaknesses.

At the fall 2003 staff in-service, the president and district board discussed the economic and political environments and the opportunities and threats they posed, followed by interactive discussion about what staff could do to influence the political and economic future. At that time, staff engaged in campus conversations to respond to environmental scanning information about other components of the external environment (e.g., changing demographics and workforce, competition, technology, etc.) and the internal analysis conducted by the President’s Cabinet. Using the matrix of questions below (Figure 8-3), staff identified strategies WCTC could adopt to take advantage of its opportunities, and to manage the threats to achieve the mission and vision and to actualize core values.

Following that staff in-service, a series of community conversations were held with key community partners including municipal executives and legislators; executive directors of non-profit agencies; and K-12 superintendents and high school principals, to understand the primary challenges they would be addressing in the future and ways the College could provide support. Sessions also were held with students and student government representatives to assess their concerns and needs. This information, in addition to ongoing environmental scanning information from the WTCS, professional organizations, and ongoing efforts of staff, formed the basis for setting strategic goals and objectives, strategic action plans and the Academic Master Plan (1C2).

Following the SWOT, gap analyses, and forecasting, the President’s Executive Cabinet identified strategic goals and key initiatives (increase retention, optimize resources, align core processes, and improve customer services). For each strategic goal, a cross-functional team of process stakeholders that included support staff, faculty and managers met to develop objectives, timeline, responsible parties, and resources needed to achieve each goal. Indicators of success were developed for each goal as well. This work was reviewed and refined by the President’s Executive Team and then shared with the entire college community where further input was sought. Final revisions were made that incorporated refinements from staff, local citizens, and the District Board.

A new cycle of strategic planning is scheduled for 2007-08. It began in fall 2007, when an interactive, all-staff college in-service was held to dialogue about the core values WCTC should stand for and how staff can demonstrate living out those values. The timeline for implementation of the new planning process is shown in Figure 8-4.

**Table 8.3 Identification process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Environment</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>SWOT (+,+) Expand &amp; Invest for Success</td>
<td>SWOT (+,-) Originate &amp; Improve for Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can we leverage internal strengths to exploit external opportunities?</td>
<td>How can we leverage internal strengths to overcome external threats?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Threats</strong></td>
<td>SWOT (-,+): Join &amp; Amplify for Success</td>
<td>SWOT (-,-) Change and Integrate for Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can we overcome internal weaknesses to leverage external opportunities?</td>
<td>How can we overcome internal weaknesses to manage the external threats?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The District Board originally developed its End Statements after adopting the Carver Model of Policy Governance in the mid-1990s. According to the model, the District Board asked:

- What are the long-term benefits the college should provide?
- For which constituents?
- At what cost?

The End Statements (Figure 8-1) are continually monitored and revised by the District Board at their annual retreat.
Short-term strategic goals were established at the college and department levels based on the long-term strategies set by the District Board. The current political environment and budget constraints has caused WCTC to shift from “being all things to all people” to providing a very focused scope of services and programs offered. Priority is now given to strategies that:

- Are aligned with the statutory mission and the college mission
- Will positively affect student learning and retention
- Will have a positive short and long-term return on investment
- Will spur the economic growth of the region
- Will improve organizational development and effectiveness

These strategies were identified through the processes described in 8P1.

8P3 Developing key action plans

Once the District Board has established budgetary and other planning guidelines, and updates have been made to the Strategic Plan (see 8P1), the College units develop four-year, rolling strategic action plans (SAP) that are linked to the college’s strategic goals. Like the Strategic Plan, each unit SAP includes one to four-year action plan activities, responsible parties, resource requirements, indicators of success and a target completion date. College units also create their own vision, mission and core responsibility statements that are aligned with the college’s vision and mission.

The SAPs are prepared and updated annually in conjunction with the annual budget. Action planning typically involves analyzing the results of program and service unit quality reviews including environmental analyses and forecasting; gap analyses of customer satisfaction and needs assessment surveys; review of advisory committee and other partnership input; and monitoring unit indicators of effectiveness.

Other planning processes

WCTC’s planning system is made up of other planning processes that support key initiatives and strategic action plans.

- **An Academic Master Plan** (1C2) is reviewed and updated continuously to respond to changing business and industry needs with extensive need surveys and secondary research conducted to determine labor market changes. This plan is used to determine what new programs and courses to offer.
- **A Vocational Education Plan** is prepared in conjunction with WCTC’s application for vocational education funds. This plan allows WCTC to seek and receive grants to fund new initiatives as well as expanded and ongoing activities.
• **A Five-Year Quality Review Process (QRP) Plan** identifies major academic program and service evaluations scheduled to maintain the relevance and quality of offerings and services. The program monitoring component of the comprehensive process helps determine whether to expand or reduce program enrollment while the improvement planning component helps to ensure continuous improvements.

• **A Master Facility Plan** addresses programmatic and support service facility needs. The instructional program needs drive the master facility plan.

• **A Multi-Year Capital Budget Plan** addresses WCTC’s long-term capital equipment needs. The college’s need for new and replacement equipment is growing. Fast-paced technology changes make this need even greater.

• **A Technology Plan** addresses WCTC’s technology needs in computers and distance education. WCTC relies increasingly on technology in the classroom and in employee offices.

• **Workforce/Succession Planning** addresses the key functions needed to be performed to accomplish directions set forth in WCTC’s Strategic Plan (SP8).

### 8P4 Aligning plans and processes
Strategic action planning is aligned and communicated among departments using the two-phase process described in 2P3.

### 8P5 Select measures and performance projections
The measures and performance projections of WCTC’s institutional strategies and action plans are determined by staff in collaboration with administration and research personnel by analyzing internal trends, regional educational and labor market information, and data forecasting models (i.e. QRP). The QRP is described in 1P8. Selected measures reflect outcomes of each department’s core services and activities.

### 8P6 Accounting for resource needs
Accounting for appropriate resource needs is addressed through a budget development process that responds to annual planning guidelines. Resource allocations, which include economic, human, facilities, and equipment resources, are based upon annual priorities identified in the division strategic action plans. Department managers and staff prepare and prioritize requests for professional development, travel, capital projects, capital equipment, and new staff. Priority is determined using these criteria:

- instructional needs based on workforce and program enrollment projections;
- waiting lists;
- equipment replacement cycles based on facilities, technology and capital equipment plans; and
- activities that will produce a return on investment.

WCTC uses zero-based budgeting for operational expenses. Projected expenses are based on the average three-year prior expenses and anticipated resources needed to carry out each division’s strategic action plan.

### 8P7 Ensuring employee development
At WCTC, professional development opportunities for all staff are an integral part of the College’s Strategic Plan. The Human Resource Services department manages faculty certification, new faculty and staff orientation, staff training, and several professional development opportunities as outlined in 4P4. Staff use the TIS, SSPDI, CIS, and NDIS to develop their goals in alignment with the overall goals of the College (4P6). Specific to developing staff’s planning capabilities, a planning and budgeting information session is held annually to orientate staff to the planning process including changing initiatives and budget guidelines. One-on-one meetings are held between new staff and key process experts to help orientate them to college planning and budgeting processes. Individuals and teams of staff also attend state and national conferences to improve their knowledge of planning, budgeting and assessment processes.

### 8P8 Analyzing planning measures
WCTC’s system of planning continuous improvement is comprised of the seven integrated planning processes described in 8P3. One measure of the effectiveness of our strategic planning process is the quality and timeliness of the results. Strategic action plan progress is reported at mid-year (January) and at year-end (September). However, having met goals is not enough. Important to staff is the usefulness of the planning system (i.e., whether it provides sufficient direction for establishing strategies and priorities) and having an opportunity to be appropriately involved. Involvement may range from being simply informed of planning activities, to having a voice in what is planned, to being
actively involved in designing and carrying out activities. The most objective measures of our effectiveness are reflected in our staff satisfaction (climate) surveys, scheduled every three years. Related Constellation survey results are presented in 8R4.

**Results**

**8R1 Action plan results**

8R1 Strategic action plan accomplishments are reported by departments at mid-year and at year-end. Key outcomes reported for 2006-07 are presented in Figure 8-5.

**Figure 8-5 Key Outcomes of 2006-07 Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Create an environment that focuses on lifelong learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Plan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconfigure each Associate Degree of Applied Science degree program to new uniform WTCS standards and to conform to the UW system requirements for transferability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocate college resources toward alignment with community needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide instructional design support for four Counter Terrorism General Aviation Airport training project courses. Training curriculum meets Homeland Security grant criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct market research studies for new programs and certificates and provide implementation support for those identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate career information in basic education and English Language Learner (ELL) learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement statewide Underprepared Learner initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create maps of external test scores to internal testing requirements such as SAT/ACT, Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and ACCUPLACER equivalents to COMPASS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the implementation of the Department of Labor Community Based Health Training grants.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>