STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

UNLV Campus Life Assessment

This document offers some tips and hints to guide staff in writing each section of their plans. Additional resources may be found in the toolbox on the Campus Life Assessment website: https://www.unlv.edu/classessment. The best planning tools, though, are rarely a substitute for personalized consultation. The director of campus life assessment welcomes and invites phone calls and conversations about your plans.

These tips offer a lot of ideas to help you polish your plans for the year. This many ideas could feel overwhelming or intimidating, so please know that you do NOT need to answer every question. Reviewing every question, though, might help you make sure that you have not overlooked something before you send your plans to your supervisor for review.

Here's the basic layout of the strategic plan.

Pillar I:

Goal I A: A broad general statement of the long range aim, related to the department mission.

Strategy I.A.1: A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve particular goal.

Leadership:

Timeline:

Budget:

Assessment Plan:

Metrics and Satisfaction Ratings:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Each row is a metric tracked on a three year trend			
Metric			
Metric			

Learning Outcomes:	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Each row is an outcome tracked on a 3 year trend			
Specify Campus Life Learning Outcome			
- list assessment tool and question			
- list assessment tool and question			
Specify next Campus Life Learning Outcome			
- list assessment tool and question			

Analysis and Recommendations: This section is usually blank when submitting plans.

For each section of the strategic plan, here are some questions to help staff check their plans and make sure they did not overlook any important details that will help their supervisors, directors, and Campus Life Assessment understand what they have in mind for the year ahead.

Strategy Statement

- Is the strategy focused and specific about what will happen this year? If a multi-year effort, the broader statement may precede the specific focus for this year.
- Does the strategy support the goal and pillar? Is it logically related to the goal and pillar? Or does it need to be a goal of its own? Under a different pillar? Under a different goal?
- Does the strategy statement adequately encapsulate the timeline, budget, metrics, and outcomes that fall under it?
- Where a strategy references a certain percent or number growth/change/decrease/etc, how was that figure derived? Why that particular percent or number vs another one?

Leadership

- For strategies impacting more than one functional area, will certain staff members provide leadership to each function? Or is every member of department equally accountable for every function?
- Is someone named? May be named by person or by role.

Budget

- Does budget specify a total dollar amount as well as amounts by expense categories?
- What is the source of funding?
- If the expenses will be offset by revenues, does the budget specify how much revenue (and source)?

Timeline

- Is the timeline specific enough to help the reviewer visualize the sequence and timing of events?
- Is the timeline broad enough to avoid listing the minutia of accomplishing the strategy? It should hit the major action steps and decision points.
- Is the time span set aside for a particular step adequate to the task? Too little time? Too much?
- Is the timeline consistent from one strategy to the next within departments? Preferred timeline is by month. Switching between fiscal quarters and academic semesters and calendar months can be confusing, and should be avoided.
- Does the timeline miss any steps, tasks, or efforts needed in order to carry out the strategy?
- Are any of the dates in the timeline holidays? Breaks? If so, highlight for department so they can confirm that the holiday/break is anticipated or intentional.

Assessment Plan

- Is there a description of the assessment plan?
- Does the plan identify the needs assessment (data or critical event) that "proved" the need for this strategy?
- How is the assessment approach to discern if the strategy is successful?
- How will data or evidence for the metrics be gathered? By when? By whom?
- How will data or evidence for the learning outcomes, if any, be gathered? By when? By whom?
- Does the plan indicate when the assessments findings will be produced, by whom, and with whom they will be shared?
- Does the plan indicate how the assessment findings will be used?

Metrics and Satisfaction

- Good descriptive label for each metric?
- Absence of verbs--e.g., increase, decrease, reduce, improve, etc. Verbs usually indicate an action step or a strategy. If any "metrics" include verbs, consider whether they should be moved to assessment plan, timeline, or even the broader strategy statement.
- Are any of the metrics actually student learning outcomes?
- Does the metric section include a trend table?

- If no trend table, is this strategy new for the coming year? What data, evidence, or critical event established the need for this strategy?
- Does the trend table show the target metrics for the coming year?
- Do the metrics relate logically to the strategy, timeline, and assessment plan? Consider whether the wording of the metric is what you would expect given what you read in the strategy and timeline.
- Are the metrics comprehensive, addressing all of the essential information needed to assess the strategy? What other metrics should they consider adding?
- Do these metrics make sense to you?
- Satisfaction ratings (means, percentages) may be reported as metrics
- Number of respondents to surveys (and response rates) may be reported as metrics
- Does each metric (or the assessment plan) indicate how it will be quantified?
- For metrics referring to scales, surveys, checklists, and such; does that instrument already exist? Has it been used in the past? If so, does the metric include the historical trend data? If it has not been used in the past, does the assessment plan indicate how and when was it selected?
- Is the survey or scale etc. designed for the target audience? (example, age groups, language, education levels)
- If the strategy is fiscal (such as increasing revenues or decreasing expenditures), do the metrics include those fiscal variables?
- Does metric table include column for this year (with target values)?
- Does metric table include a row for each metric?
- Are metrics organized on table in a logical manner--e.g., sequential or categorical?
- If targets are specified or implied in the goal, strategy, timeline, or assessment plan; do the targets in the metrics table agree with those specified or implied targets? (Example: the specified/implied target is an increase over last year, and last year reached 80%, then this year's target should be greater than 80%.
- Would GPA, retention, and graduation rates be appropriate metrics? Are they included?

Learning Outcomes
- Does this strategy directly involve students?
  - If so, does the strategy indicate which Campus Life or UNLV Undergraduate student learning outcomes apply? Are those outcomes reflected in this section with a trends table?
  - If the strategy does not directly involve students, then staff need not list UULO or Campus Life Learning Outcomes.
    - If staff learning is assessed, this section may provide a formal statement of the learning outcome(s) using the ABCD model. [Antecedent, Behavior, Change, Degree]
- How will the learning outcomes be assessed?
- If other than the 5-point learning scale from the question bank, please specify what scale was used. Trend table percentages should reflect portion of students who reported one of the top three ratings on the 5-point learning scale (i.e., 3, 4, or 5; *Moderately, Considerably, A Great Deal*). If your trend table reports only top one or top two, or if you are using a different scale, please notate.
- If assessment of learning outcomes includes the Campus Life Learning Outcomes Question Bank, which items from the bank will be administered? (NOTE: Assessment Plan may indicate when and how the selected QB items will be administered.)
- Satisfaction ratings and responses should be reported as metrics instead of learning.
- Based on your read of the learning outcomes, timeline, and strategy, are the QB items chosen the best ones? Substitute others? Add some? Remove some?
- Does the timeline include elements critical to the assessment plan? Examples: creating or revising instrument, training observers for rubrics, uploading or requesting project for surveys, gathering and uploading email addresses for surveys, pre-notification of survey, invitation to survey, reminders, close of survey, review of raw data, share findings, etc.
- Are the items listed by reference (e.g., GSS #9 or QB#23a)? If so, do the item references also include the item content (statement)? We need both.

Overall, please check the grammar and structure of your plans before submitting them. Asking a coworker to proofread for you can help you spot parts of your plan that make perfect sense to you—because you know what you meant—but that are confusing or unclear to someone else.

Grammar and Structure

- Staff may refer to the UNLV Editorial Style Guide for questions about grammar or style. For any conflicts between these Strategic Planning/Reporting Considerations and the UNLV Editorial Style Guide, staff should follow the UNLV Editorial Style Guide.
  - http://www.unlv.edu/identity/editorial
- Grammar
  - Plans are written in future tense.
  - Narratives use either first person plural (we, us, our, ours) or third person.
  - Pronouns have clear referents.
  - Punctuation, sentence structure, and word choice are appropriate to formal writing.
  - Abbreviations are spelled out at first occurrence so that uninitiated readers will know what they mean.
- Style
  - Numbering scheme follows the convention of the cluster strategic plan.
    - Roman numerals refer to the Cluster Pillar.
    - Capital letters refer to departmental goals. A department may have multiple goals under a specific pillar—e.g., III.A., III.B., and III.C.
    - Numbers indicate strategies under a particular goal. A goal may have more than one strategy—e.g., III.A.1, III.A.2, III.A.3, etc.
  - Indentions should be used to improve the visual flow of the plan by ensuring that information indents beneath the relevant section heading. Text should wrap to the left edge of the paragraph or section instead of to the left margin of the page.
  - The plan flows, so it is easy to read and understand.
  - Entries with an asterisk or other notation have a corresponding footnote to explain what the notation means.
- Content
  - Are all sections of the plan present? Any inadvertently deleted? (Pillar, Goal, Strategy, Leadership, Timeline, Budget, Assessment Plan, Metrics, Learning Outcomes, Analysis & Recommendations)
    - For plans, the *Analysis and Recommendations* section may be blank, for you have no data yet to analyze nor any findings yet upon which to base recommendations.
  - Narrative sections (goals, strategies, assessment plan, analysis and recommendations) are written with complete sentences.
  - Metrics and outcomes sections provide relevant tables showing the most recent three years of data.
    - When staff have fewer than three years of data, it is acceptable to provide the three-year table with the columns grayed out for the years without data.
    - If data is missing from a year when it should have been collected, be sure to include a notation and footnote to explain why the data is missing.
    - Other information in these two sections may appear in bullet form and use incomplete sentences as long as the information or thought conveyed is understandable.
  - If using charts/graphs…
    - Does each axis match the type of data it represents?
    - Does each axis include the full range (or set) of possible values?