

Chapter 2

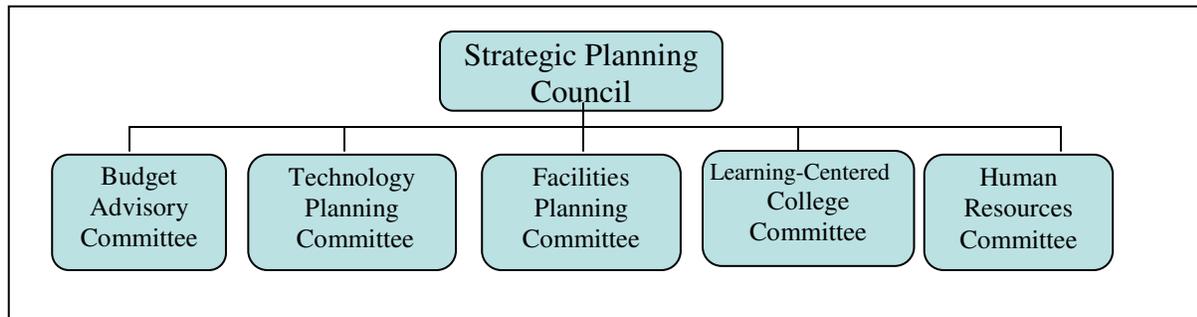
Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality. *MSCHE*

Development and Use of the Strategic Planning Council for Planning and Improvement

The adoption of the vision and mission statements and the comprehensive strategic plan discussed in Chapter 1 signaled a new approach to resource allocation at Prince George's Community College. The college became a more intentional institution requiring greater collegewide participation in planning and decision making. However, an on-campus focus group conducted on improving campus governance revealed that participants did not clearly understand the significance or impact of the strategic planning process in terms of resource allocation and institutional renewal (Exhibit 10). As a result, a collegewide Strategic Planning Council (SPC) was established with broad membership and four standing committees: Budget Advisory, Technology Planning, Facilities Planning, and Learning-Centered College. An additional standing committee on Human Resources was added in 2004. The establishment of the SPC has improved the understanding of the strategic planning process and increased alignment of institutional and unit (divisions and service offices) objectives with collegewide strategic initiatives and goals (Exhibit 11). Chart 2.1 shows the basic structure of the SPC.

Chart 2.1 Strategic Planning Council Organization Chart



Aligning the college’s strategic initiatives with appropriate budget and resource allocations has been difficult, particularly given low and decreased funding levels from the county and state. As a way of connecting planning and resource allocations, the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) established a process in which divisions must demonstrate that their requests for additional funding are tied to strategic initiatives and related goals. At the end of the first year of operation, the BAC members reviewed their efforts and made several process changes. These included differentiating among budget requests that are (a) related to mandatory increases, (b) tied to strategic initiatives, and (c) required for ongoing operational activities. In its second year of operation, the BAC specified criteria for evaluating budget requests and prioritizing resource allocations. As noted above, these efforts took place while the college faced significant funding shortfalls that severely restricted its ability to fund new initiatives. Nevertheless, all initiatives are systematically aligned with and supported by available resources.

Gaps Between Planning and Resource Allocation

A natural tension exists between fiscal constraints and the growth and expansion of programs and services that meet institutional needs. Gaps still remain between the implementation of planning goals and resource allocation, particularly given a recent and unexpected 10% decrease in financial support from the state. For example, the initiative to

increase the use of technology in instruction resulted in the creation of new computer labs and computerized classrooms. Financial shortfalls, however, have made it difficult to secure technical staff, supplies and materials, and implementation of a plan to replace obsolete equipment.

The Curriculum Committee includes representatives from the college's finance office and technology area, although, until recently, their involvement was minimal. Now the Curriculum Committee requires an estimate of long-term funding implications and technology needs to be included with new program proposals.

A history of limited resources has spurred the college to seek external funds and/or partnerships to support new initiatives and new academic programs such as Forensic Science. The college has been very successful in obtaining grants, establishing partnerships with external groups, and using Perkins grants to fund curriculum needs. However, if external resources decrease significantly, contingency funds might be inadequate to allow for growth and quality improvement of these programs. Mechanisms for linking strategic planning and resource allocation are evolving, but the college must preserve a prudent balance between fiscal control and creative innovations. If planning and resource allocations are too tightly controlled, innovation may be stifled. At the same time, reliance on external funds and partnerships to support innovation has financial and human resource implications for program sustainability.

Long-Term Resource Planning

Prince George's Community College does not routinely evaluate the adequacy of human and fiscal resources for strategic plan initiatives and goals. Periodic, long-term assessment of personnel needs has been difficult given an inadequate personnel database for

studying staffing trends by cost centers, job classification, compensation levels, or background factors. However, in 2004, a salary and benefits professional was hired to address these issues. Additionally, in the next budget planning cycle, the BAC will be analyzing staffing so committee members clearly understand all the costs associated with the addition or reclassification of staff. The new standing committee on human resources in the SPC should help the college address long-term planning issues in this area.

The acquisition of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system proposed in the technology master plan will provide better data management and create a data warehouse that extracts, transforms, and consolidates data from operational sources to facilitate access and analysis. Other additional software tools may be needed to support program management, planning, and analysis.

Use of Assessment Results for Institutional Renewal

The Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR) conducts an annual study that measures how well the college adhered to the Strategic Plan and achieved its goals in the previous fiscal year. This study, “*PGCC FY 2001 to FY 2005 Strategic Plan: 5 Year Performance Indicators by Strategic Initiative, Progress Barometer*” (Barometer) (Exhibit 12), uses more than 50 benchmarked performance measures. Findings are reported in writing and orally annually at a Board of Trustees (BOT) retreat.

The college made an informed decision to establish assessment collegewide beginning with instruction. An examination of four areas—Instruction, Student Services, Technology, and Collegewide Initiatives—demonstrates the ways in which assessment results are used for institutional renewal.

Instruction

In 1999, the Instruction area began assessing general education courses and then developing and implementing a comprehensive assessment plan. In addition to assessing general education, the plan includes

- course assessments
- program assessments
- departmental self-studies, and
- discipline assessments by external evaluators. (Exhibit 13)

The Instruction area also responds to statewide assessment initiatives from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and is currently assessing the technology competencies of students in response to an MHEC initiative.

The Instruction area uses assessment results as critical evidence for instituting program change and institutional renewal. For example, results from the Academic Profile assessment that assesses general education and is administered to graduating students revealed that these students were not performing well on measures of critical thinking. The Instructional area refocused programs and initiated *The Year of Critical Thinking* to emphasize the importance of enriching courses with more critical thinking components. Critical thinking workshops for faculty are in place. A Critical Thinking Institute for departmental liaisons is developing critical thinking modules and activities. A *Best Practices* conference on critical thinking will be held in spring 2005. A critical thinking resource library, handbook, and Web site have been created to help faculty improve students' critical thinking skills.

The new Forensic Science program provides another example of institutional renewal based on assessment. In 1997, the OPIR conducted a needs assessment indicating that the number of forensic technicians needed in the Washington, DC metropolitan area would increase by as much as 45% by 2001. Almost half the agencies surveyed reported that forensic science applicants with an associate degree would qualify for technician-level employment. At that time, only one other two-year school in the U.S. granted an associate degree in this field. In 1998, an A.A.S. degree program was offered. Because of its uniqueness as the only curriculum of its kind in the state and region, the program was approved as a designated statewide program in 1999. In 2001, an A.S. forensic science program was established as a transfer pathway to a bachelor's degree in forensic science at the University of Baltimore. In 2001, PGCC received a \$250,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for "Analyzing Evidence: Identification and Instrumentation." This grant provided funds for equipment and activities such as student internships with local crime labs. In 2004, the faculty member who developed the forensic science program received the Maryland State Department of Education "change agent" award.

Student Services

The Student Services area is partnering with other Maryland community colleges to define common student outcomes for the various functional areas in student services, e.g. advising, career services, financial aid, college activities/life services, and admissions and records. In addition, a Student Services Assessment Council has been established to develop an assessment plan and assist departments in developing departmental assessment plans.

The reorganization of Health Services into the Health Education Center is a direct result of assessment leading to program change and reallocation of resources. During an

overall review and reorganization of Student Services in 2002, the monthly service data of Health Services revealed a disproportionate emphasis on clinical service and insufficient emphasis on health education. A keynote speaker from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at a college-sponsored county health fair explained that while Prince George's County has the most educated and most affluent African American population in the country, county residents are no better informed about health issues than less affluent and less educated urban African Americans. A review of Health Services at other community colleges in the state found that an emphasis on health education predominates. Based on these assessments, Health Services was moved from the Student Development section of Student Services to the College Life Services section of Student Services. The mission was changed, the title of the unit changed, position descriptions revised, and the facility was redesigned to emphasize the education function. This was accomplished through a reallocation of existing resources.

Technology

In 2001, the college adopted *The Gartner Report: A Comprehensive Technology Master Plan* (Exhibit 14) for renewing, invigorating, and modernizing technology services for faculty, staff, and students. The Gartner Group matched five "key IT initiatives" with the college's stipulated eight strategic initiatives. In each of the five areas, the Gartner Group identified the college's current state, the future the college will face, recommendations that the college should implement, and the attendant cost assumptions.

The overarching recommendation of the Gartner Group centered on establishing a separate Technology Area whose head would serve as a member of the president's cabinet. In 2002, the cabinet level Technology Area was established and the vice president for Technology was hired. His responsibilities include chairing the SPC's Technology Planning

Committee, developing the project management processes for implementation of the Gartner Group recommendations, and providing oversight in the consolidation of the administrative and academic computing. (Use of the Gartner Group report is discussed more extensively in Chapter 3.)

In its first year, the Technology Planning Committee (TPC) began consolidating the administrative and academic computing staffs, established a Web Site and Web Portal Committee, and began laying the groundwork for an ERP solution to the college's administrative business-related computing needs and the student information database. It improved the services of "help desk" operations and reviewed the specifications necessary to keep the physical infrastructure up-to-date and capable of meeting increased demand. Committee documents are posted in the college's document management system. The Technology area also publishes a newsletter to inform the college community about the technology initiatives (Exhibit 15).

Collegewide Initiatives

The establishment of two additional degree-granting locations, University Town Center (formerly Metro Center) and Laurel College Center, in rapid succession was a critical and successful initiative based on assessed needs to increase access to the college by community members in underserved areas of the county and an outreach to international student groups. The establishment of the University Town Center in 2000 was a direct response to an assessment of Hispanic community needs and was made possible by support from the real estate developer of the University Town Center and funding from the county. The establishment of the Laurel College Center in 2002 was a direct response to the need for

underserved students in the most northern section of the county and was made possible through a unique partnership with Howard Community College.

Assignment of Responsibility for Improvement and Accountability

Assessment is becoming the college's primary vehicle for improvement and accountability. The responsibility for improvement is assigned to the individuals responsible for the area being assessed. The president is accountable to the BOT for improving the college. The vice presidents are accountable to the president for improvements in their areas that are consistent with the college's mission and strategic initiatives. For example, the vice president for Instruction recognized the need for the instruction area to identify more closely with transfer institutions in keeping with the Alliances initiative. As a result, in summer 2004, the vice president successfully reorganized the instruction area to align more closely with four-year colleges and universities. The vice presidents for Student Services and Technology, respectively, also have reorganized their areas to better align work responsibilities with accountability. The vice presidents submit annual reports that reconcile the accomplishments of their areas with the college's mission and strategic initiatives.

Within the areas of the vice presidents, individuals responsible for the various sections of the areas are accountable directly or indirectly to their respective vice president for making improvements. For example, each academic department is responsible for developing course assessment plans approved by the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC). The departments implement the approved plans, analyze the assessment results, and submit written reports to the AOAC. The reports describe the results and changes that will be made to improve the course.

For new projects and committees, the assignment of responsibility and accountability functions approximately the same way regardless of whether the assignment comes from the Faculty Senate, a vice president, or the SPC.

- A charge that defines the objective is developed, e.g., “Establishing Collegian Centers” and “Collegian Coordinators Job Description,” (Exhibits 16 and 17).
- The best qualified and interested individuals are appointed to implement the charge.
- The chair of the new project or committee is accountable to the individual who initiated the charge or to that individual’s designee.

The vice presidents develop charges, provide release time and necessary resources, and appoint interested and qualified personnel to implement the charge. This method has resulted in the establishment of many successful programs including the Faculty Professional Development Center, AOAC, the Honors Academy, the Collegian Centers, and the Critical Thinking Institute.

The SPC is charged with making recommendations to the president and BOT on the college’s long-term goals and directions. The SPC develops strategic priorities and objectives that become the basis for determining the allocation of funds for the college’s operating budget. The president’s cabinet members identify those responsible for providing data on the implementation and attainment of objectives. The attainment of annual objectives has been included in the evaluation of administrators. Finally, the dean of OPIR is responsible for coordinating assessments for accountability reports to MHEC and any other external groups, such as Middle States.

Record of Institutional and Unit Improvement Efforts

The college’s record of improvement is strong and externally confirmed. Examples include:

- Affirmation in 2004 by the Community College Service of Student Engagement (CCSSE) that the college is one of the top performers among large colleges (8,000-14,999 students) in three or more benchmarks that help “students learn and achieve their academic goals.” (Exhibit 18).
- Marked improvement in pass rates for first-time graduating nurses on the Maryland Board of Nursing Licensing Exam (MBNLE) achieved by stringent curriculum review and an intense focus on faculty professional development.

Table 2.1 MBNLE Pass Rate for First-time Graduating Nurses FY2002 to First Quarter FY2005

	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005 1st Quarter
% Passing	69%	81%	80%	95%

Sources: *Maryland Community College Databook Fiscal Year 05* (www.mdacc.org/publications/databook_fy05.htm) for FY2002 to FY2004. Chair of the Nursing Department for FY2005, 1st Quarter.

- Significant increase in majors in Nuclear Medicine Technology, Health Information Technology, and Respiratory Therapy achieved by improving communications with students and faculty professional development.

Table 2.2 Majors in Health Information Technology, Nuclear Medicine Technology, and Respiratory Therapy Fall 03 and Fall 04

Majors	Number in Fall 03	Number in Fall 04
Health Information Technology	17	29
Nuclear Medicine Technology	0	17
Respiratory Therapy	9	32

Source: *Factbook – Fall 2004: Fall Third Week Enrollment*, p. 46.

- The reorganization of the Instruction, Student Services, and Technology areas discussed earlier in this chapter is additional evidence of the college's commitment to continuous improvement.

The vice presidents' and the college's annual reports contain details of area and collegewide improvements (Exhibits 5 and 19).

Decision-Making

With the establishment of the SPC, the number of faculty and staff involved in planning and decision-making has significantly increased. Information is provided to the college community through a variety of groups, including the SPC and its standing committees, the constituency organizations (Faculty Organization, Administrative Staff Organization, Classified Staff Organization, and Student Governance Board), Deans Council, Chairs Council, Curriculum Committee, ad hoc committees, and task forces. Each group addresses issues related to its specific interests and makes recommendations to the president or his senior staff. However, given the many groups involved, the process for transmitting information is not clearly defined.

Focus groups on governing and decision-making (Exhibit 20) indicated that many individuals, including chairpersons of key committees, are still not clear how the governance, strategic planning, and administrative structures are related. While the subcommittees of the SPC understand how to advance their recommendations, various groups are uncertain. Until recently, the college did not have a document that clearly described the decision-making process at the college. OPIR has produced the draft of a booklet entitled *Strategic Decision Making: How to Get Things Done at Prince George's Community College* (Exhibit 21).

However, because campus conversations about decision-making are ongoing, the process may be revised.

Assessment of Effectiveness of Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal Processes

Although the relationship between assessments and allocation of resources has been strengthened, the relationship is not obvious to the larger college community. The SPC and administration need to emphasize this relationship to the college community and foster greater use of assessment information at all levels of decision-making.

Recommendations

1. Regularly assess the effectiveness of the college's planning process.
2. Strengthen links between planning and resource allocation.
3. Explain clearly and frequently how institutional assessment is used in decision-making and resource allocation, and emphasize the role of the college's SPC in the decision-making process.

