

The Strategic Thinking Protocol Florida Atlantic University College of Education

Strategic Thinking is the ability to analyze influencing factors both inside and outside the organization, to discover strategic direction that should guide the organization's decision-making and resource allocation for a period of 3-5 years.

1. The strategic thinking protocol outlines a process to follow to develop a statement of strategic intent.
2. The Statement of Strategic Intent establishes the mission and aspiration for the College to work toward. When properly crafted, the one page statement of strategic intent [front and back] serves as an orienting device that articulates the College's Intent and provides a sustaining direction around which organizational members [hereafter, members] can cohere. It does not focus on today's problems but on tomorrow's opportunities. The statement of intent contains an aspiration, or hope, for what the organization wants to become. It also contains the blueprint for organizational behavior, and the initiatives that will move the organization toward their aspiration.
3. The strategic thinking protocol is guided by a committee [each committee adopts its unique name: the New Directions Task Force, the steering committee - the navigating team - the guiding coalition]. The committee will be composed of 8-12 representatives from different decision making and work units. It's important to place key opinion leaders on the committee. This committee reviews data, interview summaries, observations and drafts proposal for the full college community to review and provide input on. The committee receives the input and notes items that need adjustment (if any), discusses the changes and redrafts reports to the full membership. The product of the committee's work is the statement of strategic intent
4. The strategic thinking protocol is developed through the follows five steps. A key understanding is that all members receive the same information as the committee. The purpose here is to be transparent so all members understand the problems faced and can participate in crafting the direction that will be taken. The information is processed in the following way.
 - **Step 1** – Quantitative and qualitative data are gathered from the internal and external environment. The quantitative data comes from the official University Database upon which decisions are being made. The qualitative data is gathered through interviews of individuals outside the College, summaries are written. [The following skill is needed - ability to use analytical techniques to evaluate and synthesize data from multiple sources]. Summaries of the interviews and quantitative data are developed and shared with all members.

Step 2 – A series of 5 strategic conversations – following a listen – dialogue – learn sequence will be held with all members participating.

 - **Strategic Conversation #1** - What do others expect us to do? All members are asked to review their notes and the summaries. Members are asked to identify each environment is expecting us to do prior to a retreat type meeting Procedure - We begin by writing your one big thing on flip charts that will be displayed around the room. Once the group's combined thoughts are displayed we will have a conversation

of what the internal environment expects from us. A participant observer will summarize and report the main points. [see appendix A and B for sample procedure and results]

- **Strategic Conversation #2** – What do we expect of ourselves? Core Values drive our response to the expectations of the internal and external environment? Prompts [What do we want to do? What do we need to care about?] Please do not use one-word principles; rather develop them into phrases or clauses. What can we do? [Prompts - What new capabilities do we want to develop?]
- **Strategic Conversation #3** – What are we in business to accomplish?
- **Strategic Conversation #4** - What do we aspire to become? [Prompt - What measurable outcome do we seek to achieve?]
- **Strategic Conversation #5** - What do we need to do to further our aspiration? What do we want to do? What can we do? What might we do? [Prompt - How do we create new possibilities? What new capabilities do we need to develop?]

Step 3 – At the end of each conversation, the committee makes strategic choices as to where the investment of time and money will return the best payoff on a college wide basis then presents draft statements for full member review – until consensus on each item – mission – aspiration – core values – priorities has been achieved. [Aspiration should be compelling – and able to be measured]

Step 4 – When the Statement of Strategic Intent is adopted by the College and becomes policy, it needs to be implemented so that it is a living document that guides the College toward its aspiration. At this time, the committee is disbanded and the protocol enters into the strategic planning phase – implementing teams are structured around each priority – it is this team’s responsibility to flesh out the priority and create a concrete response, and then execute it. The planning phase is guided by a quality committee [composed of different members than the strategic thinking committee]. The quality committee is charged with developing a report card to continuously review the implementation of the approved Statement of Intent. The quality committee uses this report card as a management tool to ensure that the Intent is implemented in a timely fashion.

Step 5 - The planning phase is guided by a quality committee [composed of different members than the strategic thinking committee]. The quality committee is charged with developing a report card to continuously review the implementation of the approved Statement of Intent. The quality committee uses this report card as a management tool to ensure that the Intent is implemented in a timely fashion.