

# **Establishing a Vision and Strategic Plan Incorporating Multiple Stakeholders' Voices: Creating Reciprocity and Acknowledging Community Knowledge**

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## **Abstract**

*Many urban higher education institutions recognize that the future of the institution depends on the social and economic prosperity of their surroundings. As such, they are embarking on collaborative ventures with community stakeholders and forming partnerships that mutually benefit town and gown. This article presents collaborative strategic planning as a useful method for establishing reciprocal relationships and for bringing about lasting community change. The authors outline typical planning models and further discuss the process of collaborative planning including purposes, methods and techniques, and guidelines.*

When a new president of the University of Southern California (USC), Stephen B. Sample, assumed the presidency in 1991, he set about articulating a new vision—to create a university that would make a difference in the twenty-first century. Specifically, he envisioned that the University would not only be a leading research institution but would also serve as a model for other urban campuses in terms of creating a synergistic relationship between town and gown, where both would reap the benefits of collaboration.

Situated directly southwest of downtown Los Angeles, USC is located in a neighborhood plagued by poverty and all that is associated with low-income, urban-core areas. Because of its location, USC found itself in the middle of the 1992 Los Angeles riots surrounded by flames, federal troops, looting, and violence. Left in the aftermath was a community in turmoil where many jobs, homes, and families were damaged or destroyed and a city where the economy was weak and unemployment rates were high. While many institutions may have viewed their location as a detriment and chosen to take a path of isolation from such devastation, USC saw it as an opportunity to become both a premier Research I institution and a model for other urban campuses. With the

president as the driving force behind the vision, the institution embarked on a strategic planning process to realize the vision.

Today, a decade later, the university has achieved this vision and more. It was named College of the Year 2000 by *Time Magazine/Princeton Review* because of the remarkable bonds the university has forged with local schools, community residents, police, businesses and community organizations. The 2001 edition of the *Newsweek/Kaplan How To Get Into College* guide proclaimed it one of the nation's "hottest" schools in part because of its metamorphosis from a "jock-school" to one which is a serious contender for top-notch students. Moreover, in 2001, the Association of American Colleges and Universities recognized the University as one of 16 "national leadership institutions" (*Trojan Family Magazine* 2001). USC raised over \$1 billion in only seven years, including three unprecedented gifts of \$100 million each, and attracted more sponsored research than at any time in its history. Freshman students are entering with higher SAT scores and there are more national merit scholars than in previous years. If the university had continued to operate in an inward looking, insular fashion, it is likely it would not have achieved such success nor reaped the benefits of collaboration with community stakeholders.

Across the country there are other examples of urban institutions that have embarked on collaborative strategic planning processes with their surrounding communities. There is Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, which was a university in danger of decaying along with its environment. Once characterized as an "arrogant presence" in Main South (a thickly populated, low-income neighborhood surrounding the campus), there was mutual disdain between the neighborhood and university (Holstrom 1997). Like many post-secondary institutions, for decades Clark University kept itself isolated from the nearby neighborhood. During this time many residents moved to the suburbs and the surrounding community slid into decline, which resulted in a slumping real estate market, soaring unemployment, and rising crime. Then Clark University woke up and realized that its survival and prosperity was dependent on working with the community to address the urban blight that had taken hold of the surrounding environment.

What resulted from this "ah-ha" moment was a fifteen-year partnership between Clark University and neighborhood residents and organizations in the Main South section of Worcester: local churches, government offices, the business community, and public schools. The first four years of the partnership were dedicated to small projects and to establishing trust between the community and university, which, as will be discussed later in this article, was found to be an essential feature of successful collaborative endeavors. In 1995, together with the Main South Community Development Corporation (CDC), Clark University adopted a more aggressive, comprehensive approach to restoring the urban community with a strategic plan called the University Park Partnership (UPP). The UPP now focuses on five objectives: physical renovation, public safety, education in the neighborhood, economic development, and social/recreational opportunities. Only three years after implementation, partnership had proved so successful that

representatives from five other urban universities visited Clark's 50-acre campus to learn about this university-community partnership.

USC and Clark University are but two examples of institutions and their communities that have been successful in articulating a vision that includes establishing mutually beneficial relationships and translating that vision into reality via strategic planning. Other urban institutions that have engaged in some form of collaboration with their surrounding communities are Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut; the University of Pennsylvania; Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Michigan State University; the State University of New York, College at Genesee; and Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania.

Urban institutions that break out of their ivory towers of privilege and immerse themselves in collaborative ventures with their communities do so because they realize that their fates are often tied to the community (Hackney 1994). For some institutions, it is a matter of survival; for others, their growth and prosperity depends on reaching out and working with their surrounding areas. The Knight Collaborative for Higher Education's work with four institutions on the development of strategic community partnerships revealed that the motivations for these institutions to enter into partnership with their communities were: understanding that the institutions are place-bound, with their own futures directly dependent on the social and economic livelihoods of their surroundings; realizing that community partnerships offered a means to enrich the education of students by providing increased opportunities for service-based learning as well as faculty research on community-related issues; and providing a prime opportunity to move beyond theory toward practice in achieving this dimension of their educational missions (Wegner 2000).

How do urban campuses and their constituents differ from non-urban campuses? Equally important, how can an institution go about creating reciprocal relationships with its various stakeholder constituencies? The rest of this article will explore the issues of what makes an urban campus unique and how an urban institution can create a synergistic relationship between town and gown via a strategic planning process.

## **The Urban Campus and Its Stakeholders**

In 1966, J. Martin Klotsche wrote about the urban university and the role it should play in society in general, and in the local community. He stated that the urban university must have a deep concern about the urban process and use its resources to influence the character of urban life. He quoted Henry Steele Commager: "If our universities are to enjoy the advantages of their urban position...they must assume responsibility for the development of urban and regional civilization." Clark University provided the example of how an urban institution can be negatively affected when its surrounding community takes an economic turn for the worse. Both the community and the university realized that their survival depended on a strategically planned collaborative partnership whereby the prosperity of gown would benefit town, and vice-versa.

Englebert (1997) described how, in 1972, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education spelled out the multiple roles of an urban institution: (a) provide a quality higher education experience for urban residents, (b) provide university students with city experiences, (c) prepare urban professionals, (d) develop a knowledge base for urban improvement, (e) provide essential services, (f) establish good neighbor policies toward nearby residents, (g) serve as a net economic contributor to the city, (h) maintain a stable and sound organization, (i) provide an open forum and safe haven for opinions and ideas, (j) serve as a frank social critic, and (k) serve as an agent of public policy. Clearly, the role of the urban institution can be broad and complex. However, it is not impossible to achieve and, as in the case of USC and Clark University, the rewards can be far-reaching for both institutional and community stakeholders.

Generally, colleges and universities have two categories of stakeholders—internal and external. Internal stakeholders include faculty, staff, students, parents, and governing boards. External, or community, stakeholders are those individuals and groups outside of the institution who have a strong interest in or benefit from the development of the university and its surrounding community. Community stakeholders include local businesses, chambers of commerce/economic development organizations, residents, community activists and neighborhood associations, and community/social service organizations including religious organizations, financial institutions, governmental agencies, local politicians, and schools.

Although the categories of stakeholder and/or constituency groups are similar between urban and non-urban colleges and universities, the characteristics and interests of these constituencies associated with urban institutions are far more complex and demanding because of the city's dense population and degree of potential social distress. Both the concentration and number of urban issues (i.e., health, safety, housing, and urban decay) begs for immediate and pressing allocation of institutional resources for programs and activities, such as teen guidance, anti-gang initiatives, after-school programs, sanitation, housing, family counseling, security, and much more. In addition, the sheer number of stakeholder groups within an urban college or university's service area adds further complexities.

These multiple constituencies can be a curse or a blessing, depending on how the institution manages its relationship with them. As Kerr (1968) and Reisman (1967) have described, it takes careful and strategic planning to balance the multiple constituencies in the institution's decision-making processes. Particularly for urban institutions, the immense number and diverse objectives of community stakeholders requires the use of multiple forums and practices for building community ties so decisions are made in a timely and participatory manner. Involving stakeholders also requires careful planning and facilitation because community stakeholders often work at cross-purposes. For example, an economic development group may want the college or university to co-develop vacant property into retail and office facilities while a neighborhood association may like it to be a park, and an environmentalist group may like it left alone because several species of birds are inhabitants. Bringing these diverse groups and

interests to common ground can be daunting. However, tackling such issues can be an opportunity to enhance both the physical and financial position of the institution and community, as well as providing a mechanism for bringing diverse groups together and building lasting relationships.

Therefore, if urban institutions are to survive and prosper in communities typically characterized as physically decayed, economically challenged, culturally isolated, crime-ridden, and over-crowded, they clearly need the support of both internal and external stakeholders to bring about structural and cultural changes.

## **Achieving Reciprocity Through Strategic Planning**

There are many ways in which urban colleges and universities go about building reciprocal relationships with their communities, including service-learning, implementing joint projects or initiatives aimed at a specific issue or opportunity, and co-sponsoring cultural activities. In addition, strategic planning, as a common approach institutions take to bring about fundamental changes in the direction of the organization and the practices and activities in which it engages, can be one of the most effective methods for achieving substantial and lasting changes in a reciprocal relationship between communities and universities.

There are four significant reasons why an institution would choose to embark upon a strategic planning process to bring about fundamental change. First, presidents and chief executive officers use strategic planning as the primary mechanism for engaging institutional constituents in embracing a new vision and instituting activities to accomplish it. Often, presidents will initiate a planning process when a significant change in direction is desired, such as when the president is new or after a period of relative stagnation. By itself, initiation of the strategic planning process by the president represents a commitment on their part to the process and resulting plan. Some presidents are further committed by (a) formulating a vision for the college or university that serves as the basis for further discussion and/or for the basis of the strategic plan, (b) participating in key activities of the strategic planning process, and (c) ensuring that college/university resources are allocated to the strategic plan. Given the complex nature and demands of the president's position, such commitment to institutional processes (other than strategic planning) is not likely to occur. Therefore, including community-building as an aim of the strategic planning process results in an unprecedented commitment on the part of the institution's leadership.

Second, institutions of higher education typically employ strategic planning to foster organizational change because it is a multifaceted process that is both comprehensive and inclusive—every facet of the college or university is included, counsel is encouraged and stimulates dialogue and feedback from the institution's internal constituents. Strategic planning is one of the few processes that is communicated and attended to by at least a representative majority of the institution's constituents. For example, sections and/or the entire strategic plan are typically published in numerous institutional docu-

ments such as the annual report, the operating and capital budget, student catalog, and on the institution's website. And, elements are routinely included in accreditation-related documents and reports. As such, strategic planning is one way in which to engage all constituents in the pursuit of reciprocity—to build a bridge between the institution and its community.

Third, strategic planning is also one of the most deliberate and tactical processes employed by a college or university because it often takes into consideration the institution's external environment, internal capabilities, and its overall purpose and direction. Utilizing such an approach results in logical alternatives, strategies, and solutions to critical issues and opportunities that culminate in the implementation of both short- and long-term initiatives intended to create transformation. As such, strategic planning can be a purposeful method for bringing about both immediate and lasting change in the community and/or the institution's relationship with community stakeholders, if community building is included in the process.

Fourth, strategic planning often results in accountability and measured outcomes because (a) elements of the strategic plan (such as objectives) are written in measurable terms with the intent to evaluate them at some future point in time, (b) high level administrators and board members continually examine progress towards goals and objectives, (c) administrator performance evaluations often are tied to the accomplishment of goals and objectives of the strategic plan, (d) resources are allocated to support the implementation of specific strategies and initiatives of the strategic plan, and (e) external entities such as the legislature, education coordinating agencies/boards/commissions, accrediting agencies, and grant funding organizations often attempt to reconcile the institution's activities and actions with its intended direction as outlined in the strategic plan. As a result, elements of a college or university's strategic plan are very likely to be implemented and garner a multitude of institutional resources. As such, including community-building strategies not only in the planning process but also in the strategic plan will most likely result in profound and lasting reciprocity.

Therefore, strategic planning is one of the most profound and effective methods for bringing about changes in the relationships between town and gown that result in both immediate and lasting effects. In the case of USC, a strategic planning process was used to achieve its vision of becoming a premier research university as well as a model for other urban campuses in terms of its involvement with the community. The outcome was evident with its selection as College of the Year 2000 and naming as one of the "hottest" schools.

### **Begin With a Vision**

If an urban institution desires to achieve the same successes that USC, Clark University, and others have achieved, how would they go about doing so using a strategic planning process? Generally, such planning begins with a vision statement that establishes an institution's view of the future. The view is often described as a destination, "a place to

be.” Visions can originate at various levels of the organization: (a) board of trustees/governing board; (b) president; (c) executive/senior management level; (d) a task force comprised of representatives from the various constituent groups and community members; or (e) in general stakeholder meetings (Bryant 1997).

Mission and purpose statements are one form of a vision. Other forms can be less formal and include a more nebulous and less concrete statement that is verbally communicated to the college or university community. Regardless of whether it is formal or informal, a vision needs to be clear, concise, easily understandable, and should generate commitment and enthusiasm. Several characteristics are ascribed to a vision: it provides meaning for constituents and other stakeholders; it inspires and often excites, motivating individuals to make the extra effort necessary to achieve the vision; and it is unifying and often serves to create a sense of community.

While the process and outcomes of vision setting may at times seem vague and superfluous, through a comprehensive plan it can have various benefits, which include: breaking an institution out of boundary thinking; providing continuity and avoiding the stutter effect of planning in fits and starts; helping to identify direction and purpose; alerting stakeholders to needed change; promoting interest in and commitment to change; encouraging openness to unique and creative solutions; and encouraging and building confidence in the institution.

At USC, the vision of becoming both a premier Research I institution and a model for urban campuses originated with the newly appointed president. At Clark, the vision was jointly developed between university administration and community members. Unarguably, leaders are important and their visions key for focusing attention on change and for successfully implementing the process of change. Regardless of the level at which the vision is articulated, however, leaders need to allow other people to have an important say in shaping the direction of the institution and deciding on the changes needed to get there.

## **Strategic Planning**

In order for USC to translate the vision into reality, the president appointed a committee to develop a strategic plan. Chaired by the provost, the Strategic Planning Steering Group was formed and was comprised of faculty from law, English, medicine, engineering, public administration, College of Letters Arts and Science, physics, urban planning, public administration, and undergraduate affairs. The group’s charge was to develop a plan of action that would achieve the vision the president had for the institution. Unlike Clark University, community constituents were not a part of this initial process. However, the outcomes for both universities were very similar in that the community was incorporated into the planning of various projects that benefited both the institution and the community.

Strategic planning can serve a variety of benefits for the institution, in addition to those previously stated. These benefits include helping to clearly define the purpose or

mission of the institution and to establish realistic goals and objectives consistent with that mission in a defined time frame within the institution's capacity for implementation; facilitating the communication of goals and objectives to the institution's constituents; developing a sense of ownership in the strategic plan and resulting actions, when there is engagement of the various stakeholders in the process; serving as a reminder of the key priorities and, therefore, helping to effectively channel resources; providing a scorecard, of sorts, that helps to define a base from which progress can be measured and establish a mechanism for informed change when needed; and instilling confidence in stakeholders in the ultimate direction of the institution, counteracting any perceptions of aimlessness, "leaderless-ness," or uncertainty.

Traditional strategic planning processes are sometimes considered mechanistic or linear; i.e., they are rather general-to-specific or cause-and-effect in nature. For example, the process often begins by conducting a broad assessment of the external and internal environments of the institution. This is then followed by a strategic analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), after which there is a narrowing down to identify and prioritize issues. Finally, there is the development of specific strategies to address the issues identified by the analysis.

There are various strategic planning models. The following is a description of the four most frequently used models. First, the *basic strategic planning model* is a very straightforward process and is typically followed by institutions that are extremely small, busy, and have not done much strategic planning before. At first, the process might be implemented simply in order to get a sense of how planning is conducted and then embellished in later years with more planning phases and activities to ensure well-rounded direction for the institution.

Second, institutions that begin with the "basic" planning approach described above often evolve to using another model—*issue-based (or goal-based) planning*—which tends to be a more comprehensive and more effective method of strategic planning. Activities may include a SWOT analysis; the design of major strategies (or programs) to address issues/goals, design/update vision, mission, and values (some institutions may do this first in planning); and the establishment of action plans.

Third, the *alignment model* has as its overall purpose to ensure strong alignment among the institution's mission/vision and its resources to effectively operate the institution. This model is useful for institutions that need to fine-tune strategies or find out why they are not working. An institution might also choose this model if it is experiencing a large number of problems with internal efficiencies.

The fourth model, *scenario planning*, is yet another method that may be used in conjunction with other models to ensure planners truly undertake strategic thinking. The model may be useful, particularly in identifying strategic issues and goals. An example would be the selection of external forces and then imagining related changes that might influence the institution, (e.g., change in regulations, demographic changes,

etc.). For each change in a force, there would be a discussion of different future institutional scenarios (including best case, worst case, and OK/reasonable case) that might arise with the institution as a result of each change. Reviewing the worst-case scenario often provokes strong motivation to change the institution. Suggestions of what the institutions might do, or potential strategies, for various scenarios enable planners to detect common considerations or strategies that must be addressed to respond to possible external changes.

While there may be no one perfect strategic planning model, an institution can develop its own by selecting a model and modifying it as it goes along in the planning process. Regardless of the model that is utilized there are many practices and activities that can be employed to build reciprocity.

## **Strategic Planning in a Collaborative Context**

What role should community stakeholders play in developing an urban institution's strategic plan? The thinking behind developing and implementing a collaborative strategic plan is that, together, greatness can be achieved while at the same time addressing the needs of the city. Bringing together everyone's best and most reasoned efforts has important value in building consensus about where an institution is going. Also, a sense of ownership by all stakeholder groups is an important element to ensure projects and activities derived from the strategic plan are implemented and succeed.

Although involvement of community stakeholders in the planning process may add complexity and require more time, the results are significant, including: (a) using the planning process itself to build reciprocity; (b) increasing efficiency in implementing activities and initiatives of the strategic plan due to buy-in, understanding of community members, and support from key leaders; and (c) mobilizing multitudes of individuals toward accomplishing common college/university and community objectives.

Generally, community stakeholders participate in strategic planning processes in a number of ways, including: as member(s) of planning teams; organizing community town hall meetings where stakeholder input can be gathered; conducting focus groups, interviews, surveys, or other information-gathering methods; pausing in the planning process at critical decision points to reflect on or ascertain the interests of stakeholder groups; and providing a forum via email or the institutions' web page for input. Additional ways in which institutions can involve community stakeholders are provided in the next section.

Before selecting a method, however, one must first determine purpose—purpose for collaboration in the planning process, purpose of the strategic planning process and particular model being used, and purpose of a particular activity of the planning process. When conducting strategic planning in a collaborative context, it is important to keep in mind that purpose determines practice. The extent to which participation by community members is sought and the particular methods used will depend on these purposes.

**Purpose of Strategic Planning Process.** In the case of USC, one of the primary purposes of the strategic planning process was to position the institution as an exemplary urban university. As a result, a strategic planning model was selected that would help the institution (a) determine what an exemplary urban university looks like and the activities in which it engages, and (b) to plan for the implementation of some of these activities. Another purpose of a strategic planning process could be to economically and culturally revitalize the community in which the institution resides. Generally speaking, the role and extent of community stakeholder participation in the strategic planning processes is related to the extent to which the planning process intends to bring about change in the community.

**Purpose of Collaboration.** Generally, there are three primary reasons for conducting strategic planning in a collaborative manner: (a) to increase the amount and/or the positive nature of *communication(s)* between the institution and community members, (b) to increase the level of *cooperation* and *coordination* between the institution and community members, and/or (c) to achieve *consensus* and *commitment* about how to address issues and opportunities for the institution and community. The role of community members and the degree to which they participate in the planning process (and in which particular activities) is directly related to the purpose for collaboration. For example, if the purpose is to increase communication, they may not participate in the process at all; rather, the college or university may choose to distribute materials describing the strategic planning process and/or results.

**Purpose of Planning Activity.** As stated previously, strategic planning processes tend to take a linear approach starting with an examination of the external environment and moving inward, becoming more focused and strategic. Key activities of a typical strategic planning process include visioning, environmental scanning, selecting key issues for the planning process, and working in strategy/action teams to identify strategies for addressing key issues. Generally speaking, both the purpose of the planning process and the purpose of collaboration serve as a guide for choosing which planning methods to use to involve community stakeholders; whereas, the purpose of a specific planning activity serves as a guide for choosing which techniques to use for facilitating discussions and decisions. For example, if the purpose of collaboration is to coordinate institution and community efforts, a panel of community experts (method) may be assembled to inform and provide counsel to members of the planning process who are conducting the environmental scan (technique). This point is further elaborated in the next section.

## **Collaborative Planning Practices**

There are several collaborative methods and techniques that urban institutions may use in a strategic planning process. Multiple practices and/or repeated practices (i.e., conducting several community workshops throughout the planning process) may be needed to garner desired participation and results because of the many different community constituencies of urban institutions and their complex inter-relationships, issues,

and aims. To support the premise that practice should follow purpose, as discussed above, collaborative methods and techniques are depicted in Table 1, coinciding with purpose of planning (extent of community change desired), of collaboration, and of the specific planning activities.

Table 1: Collaborative Planning Methods and Techniques

<i>Purpose of Planning Process—Extent of Change in Community Desired</i>		
<b>Minimal</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Extensive</b>
<i>Purpose of Collaboration</i>		
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Cooperation</b>	<b>Consensus</b>
<p><b><i>Methods for Bringing Stakeholders Together</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town Meetings, Public Meetings, Conferences</li> <li>• Socials</li> <li>• Communication Media</li> <li>• Surveys and Market Research</li> <li>• Radio Programs</li> <li>• Small Group Meetings</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Liaison Officer(s)</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Methods for Bringing Stakeholders Together</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultative Committees</li> <li>• Interest/Issue Discussion Groups</li> <li>• Community Members on Key Planning Committees</li> <li>• Key Decision Point Consultations</li> <li>• Interim Collaborative Structures (Teams, Committees, Meetings)</li> <li>• Consultation with Key Stakeholder(s) and Groups</li> <li>• Panel Discussions</li> <li>• Workshops, Retreats, and Seminars</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Methods for Bringing Stakeholders Together</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Members on Action-Related Planning Teams</li> <li>• Developing Collaborative Initiatives</li> <li>• Developing Collaborative Programs</li> <li>• Long-Term Collaborative Structures (Committees, Meetings, Policies/Procedures)</li> <li>• Action-Oriented Workshops, Retreats, and Seminars</li> </ul>

<i>Purpose of Planning Activity</i>		
<b>Visioning and Diagnosis</b>	<b>Assessment and Analysis</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b><i>Techniques for Participation and Discussion</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search Conference</li> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Semi-Structured and Structured Interviews/ Surveys</li> <li>• Telephone Trees</li> <li>• Newsletters, Leaflets, Informational WebPages</li> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Press Releases</li> <li>• Values Audit</li> <li>• Guided Visioning</li> <li>• Stargazing</li> <li>• Brainstorming: Unstructured and Walkabout</li> <li>• Focus Group (Nominal Group Technique)</li> <li>• Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Techniques for Discussion and Decision Making</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Space</li> <li>• Cost/Benefit Analysis</li> <li>• Beneficiary Assessment</li> <li>• Land-Use Mapping</li> <li>• Historical Mapping</li> <li>• Transect Walks and Diagrams</li> <li>• Environmental Scanning</li> <li>• Problem-Cause-Effect Trees</li> <li>• Spiderweb Analysis</li> <li>• Force-Field Analysis</li> <li>• Simulations</li> <li>• Scenario Planning</li> <li>• Mind Maps</li> <li>• Affinity Diagramming</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Techniques for Discussion and Decision Making</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment Planning</li> <li>• Strategic Assumption Surface Testing (SAST)</li> <li>• Action Planning</li> <li>• Strategic Choice</li> <li>• Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)</li> <li>• Objectives-Oriented Project Planning (ZOPP)</li> <li>• Morphological Analysis</li> <li>• Process Mapping</li> </ul>

As Table 1 shows, one should first establish the primary reason for involving community members in the planning process, including the extent to which change in the college or university and/or community is desired. Next, one should identify which phase or key activity of the planning model/process is being conducted. Once these purposes are known, one can choose which methods and practices are more suitable for collaborative planning or will likely bring about intended results. For purposes of discussion and illustration here, planning methods are the means used to bring together community and college/university members such as interim and long-term organizational structures. Planning techniques are short-term interventions used by people facilitating or managing the planning process such as specific tasks, practices, skills, and tools for participation and decision making once everyone is brought together.

For example, University A desires to build a cooperative reciprocal relationship with the community as a result of its planning process. University A would most likely be successful if it employed methods from the second column of Table 1, such as consultative committees, involving community members on key planning committees, and establishing interim collaborative structures. University A is also just beginning to initiate the planning process and will develop a vision statement shortly. University A would employ one or more techniques from the first column of Table 1, such as values audit, guided visioning, walkabout brainstorming, and SWOT analysis.

On the other hand, College B would like members of the community to be apprised of, or aware of, its planning process. College B is also in the final stages of the planning process and aims to identify specific steps or actions it can take to accomplish objectives it has identified. As such, College B could have a town hall meeting (method from column 1) to inform community members about the results of its process mapping activities and morphological analysis (techniques from column 3).

## **The Three C's of Effective Collaborative Planning**

Regardless of the methods or techniques an urban institution chooses for involving community members, institutions that are successful at building reciprocal relationships with community stakeholders, via a strategic planning process, have these three characteristics in common: common ground, commitment, and compromise. We name these characteristics—common ground, commitment, compromise—as the *Three C's of Effective Collaborative Planning*.

**Common Ground.** Acknowledging that college/university and community collaboration is not a given, but rather is developed by taking time to build mutual trust and a common understanding of language, information, politics, and one another's history (what has happened in the past that influences why they are coming together today). Institutional and community members who acknowledge that achieving common ground is important (and may be the most significant outcome of a collaborative planning process) and allow enough time in the beginning of the planning process to establish it, are more likely to reach consensus on decisions and achieve more extensive planning outcomes.

**Commitment.** The most successful collaborative planning processes are those that have people in key leadership roles who are committed to the process and results. First, university or college presidents who take a leadership role in articulating the importance of the collaborative process, who are willing to accept and implement resulting plans, and who allocate resources accordingly, communicate to all involved in the planning process that their efforts are important and valued. Collaborative planning processes also require commitment from the stakeholders who must acknowledge that the process takes time, collaborative ventures may not always be smooth and efficient, difficult decisions may be necessary and results are not instantaneous; they must be willing to see the process through from beginning to end. Collaborative planning processes also require commitment on both the institution's and community's part to sustainability. Together and independently, both should, on a routine and continuous basis, evaluate progress, re-examine and adjust plans, look for ways to further develop their relationship and sustain a shared desire for lasting change.

**Compromise.** Arguably the most significant benefit of conducting collaborative planning processes is that by bringing people together decisions and actions are more likely based on comprehensive information, diverse views, and on far-reaching reflection and discussion. Therefore, one would expect the results are more likely achievable

and are certainly different than if the institution or the community planned and acted alone. However, for a collaborative process to move forward in a timely and relatively orderly fashion, stakeholders in the planning process must be willing to compromise in order to reach consensus, must be willing to make decisions concrete and move to action quickly thereafter, and they should communicate the shared results to their respective members or constituents.

## **Conclusion**

From the above description of the who, what, where, and why of strategic planning, it is clear that more than one approach is possible. Strategic planning does, however, have a somewhat predictable trajectory, primarily a vision, mission, or purpose statement is developed and serves as the driving force behind the plan. However, the type of strategic planning that is undertaken can be as unique as the institution's needs. While the vision can originate at various levels and in various ways, there needs to be enthusiasm among the key stakeholder groups if the vision is to become a reality. In the case of USC, the vision was clearly articulated by the president. The strategic plan, which was the roadmap to achieving the vision, was developed by a team of university administrators and faculty. As can be seen, the planning process clearly did not involve every single stakeholder group; however, what was important was that while there may not have been direct involvement, the committee did take the interests of various stakeholders into account. This would prove to be crucial during the implementation process when local community needs were jointly addressed by both town and gown.

For example, local parents were concerned about their children walking to and from school. Together with neighbors, USC organized a kid watch program in which neighbors agreed to water their lawns, sweep sidewalks, or simply sit out on their porches during the time children walked home from school in order to keep them safe from the dangers of their urban neighborhoods. Another need in the local schools was for tutors and others to help children achieve academic success. USC undergraduates rose to the occasion by volunteering to tutor and read to children. In fact, more than half of USC's 15,000 undergraduates volunteer in the community, and 1,700 undertake service projects as part of the curriculum. Examples of community involvement include Spanish majors translating for immigrant children, pre-medical students working in the county morgue, and local minority-owned businesses getting customized business plans from teams of management-consultant students. This type of undergraduate student involvement in the community is explicitly stated as a goal in the university's strategic plan.

As can be seen from USC and Clark University's experience, a vision and corresponding strategic plan—that starts with articulating commitment to the urban community, incorporates stakeholder interests in the strategic planning process, develops specific strategies and action plans, and implements strategies jointly with community stakeholders—results in both the success of the urban institution and benefits the community in which it resides.

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