



# NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

## Strategic Planning

### 1. Terminology

**Strategic Planning:** An inclusive process that provides a planning framework for divisions, departments, and units to identify the most effective approach to contribute to the goals and mission of the university.

**Mission:** A statement of the reasons for being, and of the functions and desires the organization is to meet and fulfill.

**Vision:** A clear, easily understood image of a better future that guides and inspires.

**Values:** A statement of values describing how the university intends to deliver its mission. These are the university's core principles of conduct.

**Goals/ Objectives:** Desired outcomes; it is the “what” in strategic planning.

**Strategies/ Strategic Directions:** Key actions that help achieve the goals; it's the “how” in strategic planning

**Tactics/ Initiatives:** More detailed actions or steps to achieve goals and strategies.

**Priorities:** Key issues or actions that merit high attention and allocation of resources; critical to the University; support one or more goals

**Key Performance Indicators/ Measures:** A system of the institution's most important performance metrics tied to the university strategic goals

**Enterprise Metrics:** The metrics tracking the institution's performance on the goals set by the Arizona Board of Regents for the Arizona University System.

## 2. Principles

- The university strategic planning process is participatory and inclusive; welcoming creativity, initiative, and strategy development from senior leadership, faculty, staff and students.
- The process is facilitated by the Strategic Planning and Budget Council (SPBC)—a work group that oversees the review and revision of the strategic plan and leads the university in a discussion on near-term priorities.
- Groups representing students, faculty and staff as well as formally recognized organizations of shared governance provide advice and feedback. SPBC uses this input to periodically refine the strategic plan and recommend new strategies and priorities to the President.
- Priorities are likely to need several years to be accomplished. The number of priorities established in any year is limited as resources (people, attention and budget) are relatively scarce and should be focused. Some years, only a very few new priorities might be established as “old” priorities continue to command attention or as gaps in the action plans are identified.
- The priority setting process should not limit the institution’s agility to respond to new opportunities. The planning process calls for an evaluation of the opportunity in the context of the institution’s mission, long-range goals and annual priorities, especially if unexpected, significant institutional financial resources are to be committed. However, if such an opportunity is presented and taken outside the normal planning time-line, the opportunity becomes a priority. Priorities develop from both internal and external sources. Frequent communication is essential with the campus on what the priorities are, what the action steps are, what resources are being committed and what progress has been made.
- Budget resources to fund priorities can come from a wide range of sources including state funds, local budgets, auxiliary, grant and gift funds, and tuition dollars. Strategic planning only works if the budgeting is an integral part of the process.
- Colleges and divisions are responsible to incorporate the strategic plan strategies and priorities into their own strategic and operational plans. Progress toward strategic plan goals and year-to-year priorities will be measured, and a major analysis will occur once a year, the results of which will be shared throughout the campus.
- The annual Strategic Planning process is coupled with the budget process. The annual budget from the state is a critical component of our resource base. Similarly the university strategic planning process must be linked to the capital planning process and information technology planning.

**“Strategic Planning, What Works... and What Doesn’t”** *American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) Third Knowledge Symposium, 1998*

- a clear, well-understood vision and direction from the CEO
- a CFO who is a champion of the process
- a culture that supports trust, truth, and accountability
- good benchmarking skills
- good strategic skills
- well-informed, cross-functional, cross-group networks
- a good external view of success
- exceptional communications

### 3. Planning Cycle

The university-level (internal) strategic plan has been reviewed and revised every three years over the last decade and somewhat less frequently before. The revisions over the years respond to the changes in the external environment and reflect the planning culture of the institution and, more broadly, of the higher education sector. While the planning language has evolved (reflecting many cultural shifts in the society), looking at the evolution of the goals over the entire existence of Northern Arizona University it is remarkable how little the core focus really changed.

The internally vetted university-level strategic plan provides directions for divisional planning efforts and a framework for an annual exercise identifying planning and budget priorities. As the university's budget situation becomes clear—when the state appropriation is set and as enrollment and tuition growth become known—the president approves funding of the highest priorities.

The following chart focuses on planning activities that result in identifying top priorities for which the university seeks funding above the annual baseline. Two key mandated documents that summarize the institution's near-term strategic focus are **State Operating Budget Request** and a **5-year strategic plan** mandated by A.R.S § 35-122 and published on January 1 by the Governor's Office of Strategic Planning and Budgeting (OSPB).

